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Indonesian modern art historiography: national and transnational perspectives

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On the Call for Revolution

This chapter offers an alternative narrative of the national revolutionary period throughout 1945-1950 in the history of modern Indonesian art by drawing upon seldom utilized sources. Some stories from this period had not been revealed - or were deliberately left out by historiographers. Some of these are scattered in magazines, newspapers, and memoirs. It took some time to find how these sources intertwined and then construct a chronology. Well-known historiographers like Claire Holt, Sanento Yuliman, Jim Supangkat, and M. Agus Burhan often neglected to include the chronological order of events, thus omitting significant historical contexts when discussing the period.

Claire Holt provided a special section for the revolutionary period, "After Independence." Yet, she did not offer many facts under this part, as if nothing happened after the proclamation of Indonesian Independence or between August and December 1945 and early 1947. Rather, Holt immediately jumped to 1946 by mentioning briefly only the founding of artists' collectives such as the *Tenaga Pelukis Indonesia* or *PTPI* (Center of Strength of Indonesian Painters), *Seniman Indonesia Muda* or *SIM* (Artists of Young Indonesia), and *Pelukis Rakjat* or *PR* (The People's Painters). Holt then skipped to 1948.¹

In his renowned book, *Seni Lukis Indonesia Baru - Sebuah Pengantar* (New Indonesian Painting - An Introduction), Sanento Yuliman also provided the same generalization, writing that: "The move of the government capital from Jakarta to Yogyakarta in 1946 was followed by the migration of painters, and Yogyakarta then became the center for painting activities."² Jim Supangkat also repeats the same narrative in *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond*. He writes: "When the center of the fledgling

¹ See Claire Holt, *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 200-205.

² Sanento Yuliman, *Seni Lukis Indonesia Baru: Sebuah Pengantar*, (Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 1976), p. 12.

government moved from Jakarta to Yogyakarta in 1946, the painters moved as well. And this is how Yogyakarta became a center for fine art activities."³ A similar narration can also be found in the following sentences: "In 1946, the center of government temporarily moved from Jakarta to Yogyakarta, and this was immediately followed by the move of painters to Yogyakarta. Because of this event, Yogyakarta later became a base for interesting and important activities and growth of painting."⁴

Such a fragmented plotline can also be seen in Agus Burhan's research, leaving broken trails and discontinuities between events. Burhan is the most recent academic to conduct research in the historiography of post-independence Indonesian art. Like Holt, Burhan focused on the move from Jakarta to Yogyakarta, written with a single line of a simple proposition: "the republic's capital moved, bringing with its political leaders, military, intellectuals and artists." Compared to Holt, Burhan provides a forum for discussion for several of the artists' collectives mentioned above. Furthermore, Burhan also touched on some *sanggar* (artist studios) formed during the revolution such as *Gabungan Pelukis Indonesia* or GPI (Indonesian Painters Association), *Gelanggang* (The Arena), *Himpunan Budaya Surakarta* or HBS (Surakarta Cultural Association), *Sanggar Pelangi* (The Rainbow Studio), and several more. Burhan wrote the names of these artists' collectives, founded between 1945 and 1950, in one paragraph without suggesting a chronicle and context. Although it produces vagueness and repetition, Burhan's efforts were sufficient to provide an overview of the dynamics in the art scene at that time.⁵

The storylines about the move of artists to Yogyakarta in line with the transition of the Republic to Yogyakarta have become familiar narratives but have not yet progressed chronologically. At the same time, most historiographers engage in self-referentiality, resulting in redundant

³ Jim Supangkat, *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond*, (Jakarta: The Indonesian Fine Arts Foundation, 1997), p. 44.

⁴ Suwarno Wisetrotomo, "Melacak Garis Waktu dan Peristiwa" in Soedarso Sp, et.al., *Pameran Seni Rupa Indonesia: Melacak Garis Waktu dan Peristiwa-Penampang Karya Seni Rupa Koleksi Direktorat Jenderal kebudayaan Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan*, (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal kebudayaan Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1998), p.20. "Tahun 1946 untuk sementara pusat Pemerintahan pindah dari Jakarta ke Yogyakarta dan serta merta diikuti oleh pindahnya para pelukis ke Yogyakarta. Karena peristiwa itu Yogyakarta kemudian menjadi basis kegiatan dan pertumbuhan seni lukis yang menarik dan penting."

⁵ See M. Agus Burhan, *Seni Lukis Indonesia: Masa Jepang Sampai Lekra*, (Surakarta: UNS Press, 2013), pp. 22-24. See also Imam Buchori Zainuddin, *Latar Belakang Sedjarah Pembinaan dan Perkembangan Seni Lukis Indonesia Modern (1935-1950)*, Skripsi Sarjana Strata 1, Departemen Seni dan Perencanaan, Seksi Seni Rupa, Institut Teknologi Bandung, 1966, p. 60.

storylines. For example, Burhan's description of some artists' collectives is a repetition, not a discovery, because Burhan relies on the writings of Trisno Sumardjo, "Kedudukan Seni Rupa Kita" (The Position of Our Indonesian Fine Art), published in 1956 (Fig.6.1).

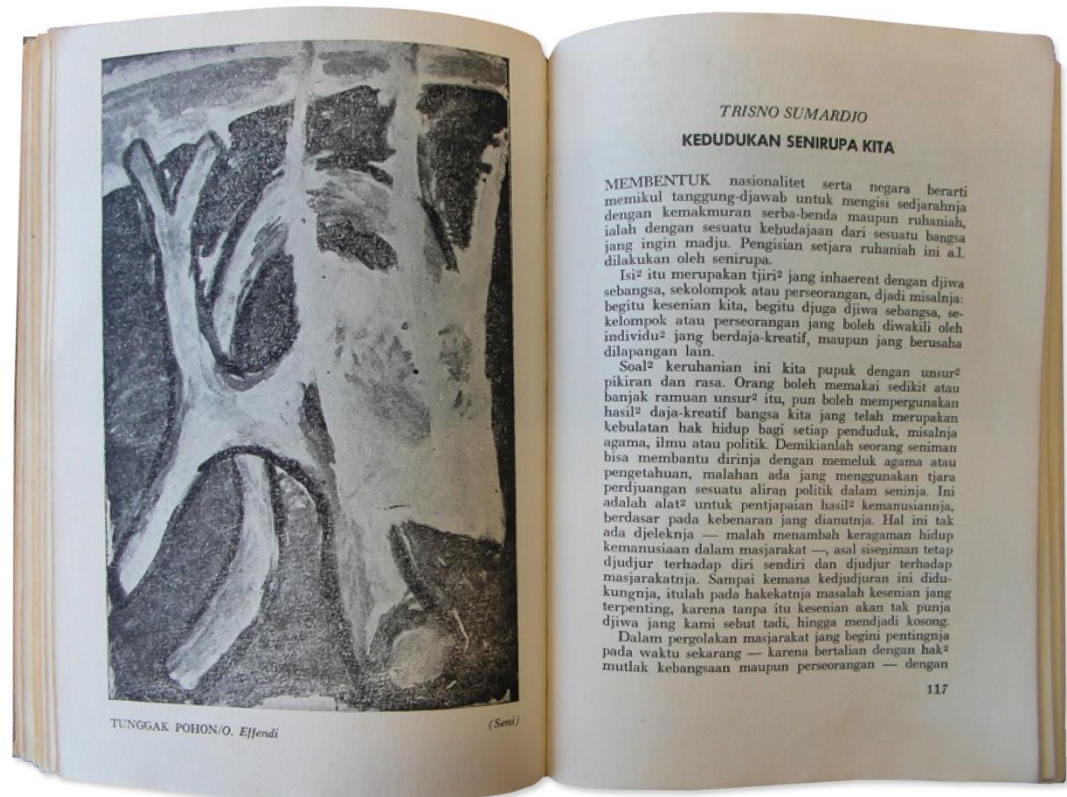


FIGURE 6.1.
Trisno Sumardjo, *Kedudukan Seni Rupa Kita*, 1956.

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

Sumardjo's contribution to historiographic studies is pivotal, as it provided the only comprehensive list of artists and groups that emerged during the revolution. This work, which later became Burhan's primary source and was also used by the authors of the canonical book *Sejarah Seni Rupa Indonesia* (History of Indonesian Art), has had a significant impact on subsequent studies. For instance, the book offers the name of the period as "Periode Pendirian Sanggar Antara 1945 dan 1950" (the Period of the

Studio's Establishment between 1945 and 1950), explaining the emergence of many artists' collectives during the time of the revolution and making "Periode Sanggar" famous in mainstream Indonesian art historiography. Yet, this canon book's focus was limited to the names of artists and studios, and needed a chronicle and context.

However, the Revolutionary Period can be viewed from multiple perspectives, such as artistic production (including propaganda products for example posters, comic strips, and billboards), movements, exhibitions, debates, networks, and affiliations of artists with specific political or ideological forces. Extensive observations are therefore needed to narrate the revolutionary period, considering the number of artists involved during this period and the spread of artistic activity locations in several cities. Nevertheless, this chapter will highlight cities in Java, in particular Jakarta and Yogyakarta. This approach is taken to keep focus and maintain continuity from the previous phases, where artistic activities were more centered in Jakarta.

What activities were artists involved in from the Proclamation of Independence on 17 August 1945 until 1950? How did the move from Jakarta to Yogyakarta take place? What impact did the 2nd Dutch Military Aggression, which occurred from 19 December 1948 to 5 January 1949, have on the art scene in Yogyakarta? What artistic products were produced? What has been inherited from this period?

I have divided this chapter into three sub-chapters and sections to answer these questions. The first *Revolution Calling* followed by several sections chronologically – from 1945 to 1950, namely *Seniman Merdeka*, *Pusat Tenaga Pelukis Indonesia*, *Move to Yogyakarta*, *Gelanggang*, *Seniman Indonesia Muda*, *Revolution Goes to Amsterdam and Accusations of Betrayal*, and *The Making of the Art Academy*. The second sub-chapter is *Impact of Aggression: The Great Loss and Back to Jakarta* and followed by *The Great Loss*, and *The Role of Taman Siswa*. At the end is a *Conclusion*. All sub-chapters and sections provide a chronicle by using neglected historical sources, such as activities after the Proclamation of Independence on 17 August 1945, the move to Yogyakarta, exhibitions, artists' collectives, the destruction of paintings, accusations of betrayal against Agus Djaya, the impact of Dutch military aggression especially as concerns the loss of works of art and archives related to propaganda that artists worked on, and the role of Taman Siswa in Jakarta after the aggression. I will try to weave these topics together in such a way

as to offer a window for viewing the dynamics in the art scene during those years which have never been reviewed.

Revolution Calling

Indonesian artists had gained a heightened awareness of their prominent role in the art scene since the Japanese occupation, owing to their exceptional capacity to convey intricate concepts through artwork. When the call for revolution arose, they efficiently utilized art as a catalyst to incite revolution, rallying individuals and instigating social movements. Artists established groups, exhibited works, composed songs, initiated travelling theatre performances, wrote poetry, released periodicals, designed and spread posters, and much more. Based on historical sources, the revolutionary period was productive even though the legacy of works from this period is minimal. As discussed below, this may in part be because some were destroyed due to Dutch military aggression. From 1945 to 1950, artists were actively involved in artistic activism as a crucial aspect of their involvement with the revolution. This involved using subversive and thought-provoking expressions to instigate social and political transformation. Artists believed their work raised awareness, cultivating revolutions, transforming society, and confronting entrenched racial biases. This sub-chapter presents the actions undertaken by individuals in a revolutionary situation.

Seniman Merdeka/Freedom Artists

A pivotal historical source to initiate the account of art activities in Jakarta following the Proclamation of Independence on 17 August 1945 is the testimony provided by journalist Rosihan Anwar in his brief memoir. At first, he explained the mental changes among artists in line with the rapid changes in society. The Japanese phase suddenly ended, and Indonesia entered a revolutionary phase. Anwar subsequently referred to a historical event that took place "shortly after the Proclamation of August 17th, 1945," at the *Keimin Bunka Shidōsho* headquarters in Jakarta. Unfortunately, he omitted the specific date and the identity of the artist who was present during the dissolution of the propaganda office.

However, he recollected the rapid dissemination of the revolutionary fervor, which led the artists to unanimously cease all their propaganda art

endeavors in support of the Japanese military. Soon after the proclamation, the artists welcomed what Rosihan called the "new era," as he wrote: "We are entering a new era. We all realize that we must continue to fight for the independence of the nation and state that has been proclaimed."⁶

To begin the new era, painters, poets, actors, and musicians immediately involved themselves in the revolution by stirring the spirit of national independence to all corners of Jakarta. The artists, who were mostly former members of *Keimin Bunka Shidōsho*, created a new group called *Seniman Merdeka* or *Seniman Indonesia Merdeka* (the Freedom Artists or the Artists of Freedom Indonesia), under the leadership of Sudjojono, with Usmar Ismail as deputy. Little information exists about the group that seemed to continue the propaganda work of the previous *Keimin Bunka Shidōsho*.

Members of *Seniman Merdeka* included, among others, Usmar Ismail, Cornel Simandjuntak, Suryo Sumanto, D. Djaja Kusuma, S. Sudjojono, Basuki Resobowo, Sarifin, Suhaimi, Rosihan Anwar, and Malidar (the only woman).⁷ Meanwhile, Sudjojono also mentioned in his memoirs that poet Chairil Anwar was involved.⁸ There are also no sources to determine whether this group's status is independent of any other revolutionary movement. One source says *Seniman Merdeka* operated under *Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia-API* (Indonesian Youth Force) with its most nationalist exponents being Wikana, Chaerul Saleh, and Sukarni.⁹

Another source to confirm Sudjojono's role in leading *Seniman Merdeka* in Jakarta is the testimony of writer and art critic Muhammad Balfas. According to Balfas, painters Sudjojono suggested that painting and other art forms were weapons of the Revolution. He had a solid nationalistic mind and extensive knowledge of history, especially about the role of artists in the revolutions in other countries. Because of this, he wanted Indonesia's struggle to become an artistic revolution, not anarchy without calculation. During these times, Sudjojono's leadership, commitment, and dedication to

⁶ Rosihan Anwar, "Sekelumit Kenang-kenangan Kegiatan Sastrawan di Zaman Jepang (1943-1945)" in *Budaya Djaya*, No.65, October 1973, pp. 595-596. See also Tashadi, et al., *Partisipasi Seniman dalam Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta*, (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 1996), p. 36.

⁷ Tashadi, dkk., 1996, p. 4. Compare with the discontinuity offered by Kusnadi in Kusnadi, 1990-1991, p. 93. and Sidik Kertapati, 1957, p. 27.

⁸ S. Sudjojono, *Cerita Tentang Saya dan Orang-orang Sekitar Saya*, (Jakarta: KPG-Gramedia, 2017), p. 84. See also Rosihan Anwar, 1973, p. 596.

⁹ See Sidik Kertapati, *Sekitar Proklamasi 17 Agustus 1945*, (Djakarta: Jajasan Pembaruan, 1957), p. 27.

the Revolution made a strong impression on his colleagues, leading him to be appointed *Seniman Merdeka's* leader. Balfas testified: "When the embers of revolution started to spread throughout Jakarta, we saw Pak Djon (S. Sudjojono) leave his studio and join in stirring up the spirit of the people with his drawings placed on the street, in the markets, and on house walls."¹⁰

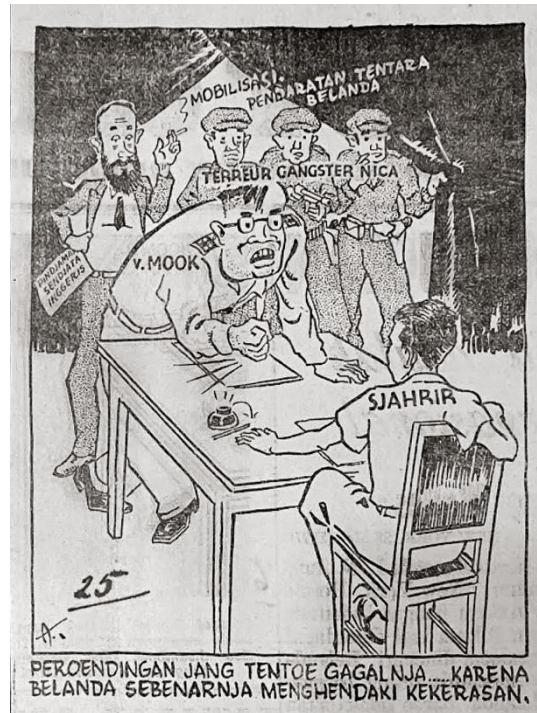


FIGURE 6.2. Abdul Salam caricature: "The bankruptcy of the Dutch is about time."

(Source: *Merdeka*, 17 January 1946)

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

The first step that Sudjojono took as leader was to make sure the logistics were in place for propaganda activities. Then, together with musician Cornel Simandjuntak,¹¹ Sudjojono requisitioned the cash

¹⁰ M. Balfas, "Mendjelang Seniman Sudjojono" in *Masjarakat*, No.1, Th.II, 5 January 1947.

¹¹ After the Japanese occupation, Cornel Simanjuntak composed independent songs. He was known as an "artist and soldier." Some of his popular marches that are still sung today are *Maju Tak Gentar* and *Sorak-sorak Bergembira*. He was reportedly involved in a battle with NICA in Jakarta that left a bullet embedded in his leg. He was then treated in Yogyakarta and passed away not long after. See Binsar Sitompul, *Cornel Simanjuntak: Komponis, Penyanyi, Pejuang*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1987), pp. 51-56.

from *Keimin Bunka Shidōsho* offices. After this, using trucks – just as *Keimin Bunka Shidōsho* did – the *Seniman Merdeka* group toured the city. Rosihan Anwar witnessed that Sudjojono orated on the truck with people gathering around. The topics of Sudjojono's speeches generally contained words that would invigorate the people's spirit to fight for independence.¹² They sang, agitated, made posters, and graffitied the city's walls with provocative statements about the right to autonomy. Dullah remembered that the painters who descended to the streets to do graffiti on walls and trams were Mochtar Apin and Suromo. Painters Abdul Salam, who worked as illustrators for *Merdeka* newspaper during that time, often made caricatures that condemned the Dutch political strategies (Fig.6.2).¹³

In his autobiography, painter Basuki Resobowo revealed why he joined *Seniman Merdeka* later than the others. Resobowo, at that time, had only been released from the Japanese military police (*kenpeitai*) imprisonment due to suspicion of anti-Japanese activities. “I was only released in 1945, two days after the proclamation of independence. So, I did not experience the proclamation and the preparation beforehand,” wrote Resobowo.¹⁴ After his release from prison, he immediately involved himself in the graffiti activities on city walls and passing trams. He claimed that the tram graffiti activities were done together with painter A. Wakidjan.¹⁵

Touring the city with trucks, creating posters, and graffiti did not continue for long. The activities by *Seniman Merdeka* carried out after 17 August only continued for two months, until about October 1945. It is not known precisely when the activities of the artists ended. However, on 1 October 1945, the *Merdeka* newspaper still reported artists' activities that ignited the spirit and instilled an awareness of the meaning of independence and the new state of the Republic of Indonesia.¹⁶ Approaching the end of the

¹² Rosihan Anwar, “Seniman dan Wartawan dalam Perjuangan 1942-1950”, Paper for the Seminar of the Role of Youth in the Nation's Struggle 1942-1950 Yogyakarta, 20-21 December 1989, p. 8.

¹³ Dullah “Mas Affandi” in Ajip Rosidi, et al., *Affandi 70 Tahun*, (Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 1978), p.43 and Dullah “Teks Pidato Peranan Generasi Muda dan Sejarah Perjuangan Bangsa”, seminar paper, Masyarakat Sejarawan Yogyakarta and Balai Kajian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Yogyakarta, 20-21 December 1989, p. 8.

¹⁴ Basuki Resobowo was imprisoned due to suspicion of conspiracy with groups spreading propaganda of “anti-free Indonesia the Japanese puppet”. See Basuki Resobowo, *Riwayat Hidupku Bagian Ke-Empat*, personally published by Basuki Resobowo, Oosterpark 63, 1092 AR, Amsterdam-Holland, 1987, pp. 26-27.

¹⁵ Basuki Resobowo, *Bercermin di Muka Kaca: Seniman, Seni, dan Masyarakat*, (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak, 2004), p.107.

¹⁶ See “Barisan Seniman Menjerboe Ketengah Rakjat” in *Merdeka*, 1 October 1945, p. 2.

year, *Seniman Merdeka* was scattered. Some of them took up arms and joined the battle.¹⁷

I did not find any sources to expand *Seniman Merdeka's* narrative. However, as explained in Chapter 7, in December 1945, several painters - it is not yet sure whether *Seniman Merdeka* was involved - organised an exhibition that had great significance in art history. The Indonesian government used this exhibition politically to inform the international world that the Indonesian nation is a cultural nation, and not a group of bandits or terrorists who suddenly proclaimed their independence. This exhibition proves that artists have made no small contribution to guarding the national revolution.

Pusat Tenaga Pelukis Indonesia – PTPI
(Center of Strength of Indonesian Painters)

Before addressing the situation in early 1946, characterized by the Republic's relocation to Yogyakarta with the artists following, it is imperative first to acknowledge the artistic endeavors taking place in Yogyakarta. Hence, it is crucial to underscore that *Seniman Merdeka* in Jakarta was not the sole artists' collective established during the early stages of the revolution. In Yogyakarta, on 20 October 1945, artists' collective *Pusat Tenaga Pelukis Indonesia – PTPI* (Center of Strength of Indonesian Painters) was formed that progressively focused on the propaganda of independence and anticolonialism.¹⁸ This organization was led by Djajengasmara, and was strengthened by Indro Soegoendo, Soerjosoegondo, Sindusisworo, Soegiri, Prawito, Sukamto, Harjadi, Tjondro Sangkojo, and Sukrido. They had sixty members in total.¹⁹

Sanento Yuliman thought that PTPI was another version of *Keimin Bunka Shidōsho*.²⁰ Before August 1945, this organization was still named *Badan Perdjuangan Poster Aksi* (Action Poster Struggle Organization), which painted walls and trains to promote independence. The wall-painting, poster making, and slogan painting around Yogyakarta

¹⁷ Rosihan Anwar, 1989, p. 8.

¹⁸ Center for Painter Workers Indonesia.

¹⁹ The list of names involved and their roles in producing propaganda posters in PTPI activities can be found in Djajengasmara, *Perjuangan P.T.P.I.*, papers in preparation for "Reuni P.T.P.I 1978-1979", 10 June 1978, Documents of Djajengasmara, unpublished.

²⁰ See Sanento Yuliman, *Keindonesiaan, Kerakyatan dan Modernisme dalam Kritik Seni Lukis Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Gang Kabel, 2020), p. 111.

increased after the independence proclamation was read in Jakarta.²¹ According to Djajengasmara, the Information Ministry officially recognized this organization as part of the *Badan Perjuangan Penerangan Rakyat* (People's Struggle Information Organization), which "fought with paint, pencil and paper together with bullets and words of diplomacy to rid the colonizers from Indonesia."²²

PTPI was an inclusive organization characterized by the slogan "from the people, for the people, by the people." This organization actively engaged individuals in creating propaganda posters utilizing materials such as paper, textiles, and wood. Furthermore, illustrations were created employing stencilling or spray-painting techniques. PTPI anticipated that their propaganda efforts would garner global attention.²³ One of the most attractive PTPI activities was propaganda using a projector projecting images on a wall, accompanied by a speech broadcasted through speakers. They called this the "Projected Poster." This strategy was deemed effective as it attracted public enthusiasm so that PTPI felt it needed to narrate the independence struggle systematically. Djajengasmoro, the founder of PTPI, stated that one instance of propaganda material was the display of thirty posters in sequence narrating the determination of the populace in their struggle to liberate themselves from Dutch colonization.²⁴

PTPI also organised exhibitions. Its debut exhibition was held on 8 June 1946 as part of the 2nd Youth Congress in Yogyakarta. The show featured paintings by its members and reportedly received a comprehensive response.²⁵ PTPI's other significant contribution was its orientation towards education outside its propaganda activities. Later on, several of its exponents would be involved in the founding of an art school known as Indonesian Academy of Art (Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia – ASRI).²⁶ Unfortunately, I have not found evidence on how the PTPI exponents connected or

²¹ Djajengasmara, *Tjataan Riwayat Perdjoengan P.T.P.I Mulai Tanggal 20 Oktober 1945*, Naskah Pidato Peringatan "Ulang Tahun ke-7 P.T.P.I Jogjakarta", 20 October 1952, Documents of Djajengasmara, unpublished. See also Djajengasmara, *Perjuangan P.T.P.I*, 1978.

²² Djajengasmara, *Perjuangan P.T.P.I*, 1978. See also *Perdjoengan PTPI in Revolusi Pemoeda*, 25 December 1945.

²³ "Seroean P.T.P.I" in *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, 2 July 1946.

²⁴ Djajengasmara, *Perjuangan P.T.P.I*, 1978. Regrettably, I have not discovered any photographic records that more accurately portray the propaganda apparatus.

²⁵ See Hardjito, *Risalah Gerakan Pemuda*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Antara, 1952), pp. 51-52.

²⁶ The story of the founding of an art academy in Yogyakarta can be seen in Tashadi and Bambang Sularto, *R.J. Katamsi Martohardjo: Hasil Karya dan Pengabdianya*, (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional/Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1981-1982), pp. 29-54.

intersected with the painters who migrated from Jakarta to Yogyakarta. This intersection happened when ASRI was founded in 1950, where some of them took up roles as educators at the campus.

Move to Yogyakarta

Unlike what is perceived in the standard narrative, every artist had his/her way of moving to Yogyakarta, and this did not happen all at once. Apart from that, not all artists who went to Yogyakarta came from Jakarta, as will be discussed in this section. As with Holt, Yuliman, Supangkat, and Burhan above, a skipping storyline can also be seen with Spanjaard. I will begin this section by quoting a paragraph from Spanjaard. Spanjaard wrote that, when Soekarno decided to move the capital from Jakarta to Yogyakarta in early 1946: "Many artists (painters and writers) followed him. Several of them settled in Madiun, where the revolutionary artist group SIM (*Seniman Muda Indonesia*) was founded by Sudjojono, Trisno Sumardjo, Sunindyo, and Suradji."²⁷

Spanjaard led readers to believe that the artists' names mentioned in the paragraph – "and several others" – joined the migration to Yogyakarta with Soekarno. Did Sudjojono and Trisno Sumardjo also first move together with Soekarno to Yogyakarta? But who was part of Soekarno's entourage? I conducted research to try to answer these questions but found no relevant sources. Yet, I have recently found one document where only one painter was recorded as part of Soekarno's entourage to Yogyakarta: Affandi. The document states, "Affandi left Jakarta with Soekarno by train in early January 1946 and was in Yogya for the rest of the revolution."²⁸

I argue that Sudjojono was not in the train that brought the republic to Yogyakarta; at that time, he was living in Jakarta. On the other hand, Sudjojono's presence was urgently needed to help with propaganda activities to the point that the Government felt it had to summon him through a newspaper. I found evidence of this summoning on the first page of *Merdeka* newspaper in a column titled "Summons to Art Workers," published 3 January 1946 (Fig. 6.3). In the column, S. Sudjojono, Cornel

²⁷ Helena Spanjaard, 1998, p. 117. "Veel kunstenaars (schilders en schrijvers) volgden hem. Een aantal van hen vestigde zich in Madiun, waar de revolutionaire kunstenaarsvereniging SIM (Seniman Muda, Jonge Indonesische Kunstenaars) werd opgericht door de schilder Sudjojono en de schrijvers Trisno Sumardjo, Sunindyo en Suradji."

²⁸ Documents of Robert Cribb, *Algemeen Rijksarchief Tweede Afdeling*, Losse Aanwinsten vanaf 1980, Inv.nr. 188. My gratitude goes to Remco Raben who informed me of this document's existence.

Simandjuntak, Sumanto, and Djojokusumo were summoned by the Government of the Republic to “immediately and with haste arrive in Yogyakarta to help the Information Ministry.”²⁹ Unfortunately, despite the extraordinary and urgent summons, Sudjojono could not immediately leave Jakarta.

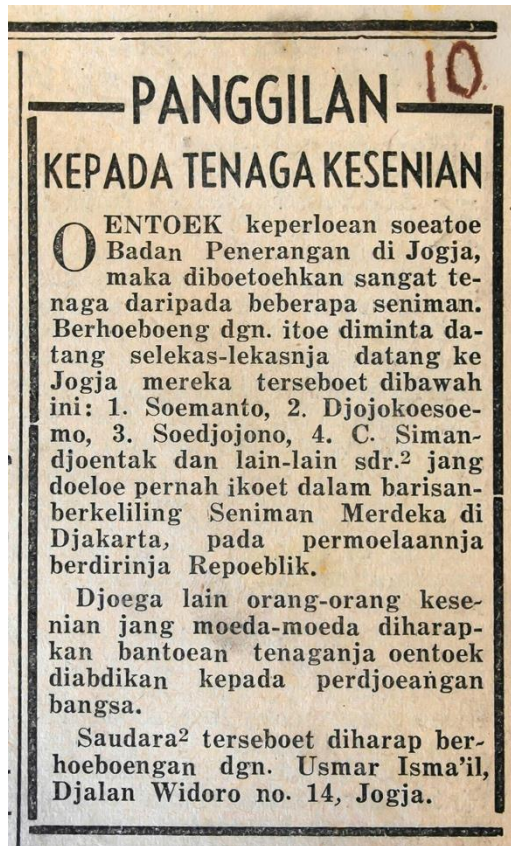


Fig.6.3. *Panggilan Kepada Tenaga Kesenian.*
 (Sources: *Merdeka*, 3 January 1946)

Collection of Leiden University Library
 Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

In early 1946, Sudjojono was still in poor health caused by malaria. Once he had recovered, he immediately left Jakarta, although he did not go directly to Yogyakarta. Instead, he stayed for a while in the town of Cikampek - about 30 km from Jakarta. Then from Cikampek, he continued his journey towards Madiun, which is around 164 km from Yogyakarta.³⁰

²⁹ “Panggilan Kepada Tenaga Kesenian,” *Merdeka*, 3 January 1946, p. 1. The summons was also directed to other artists to help the independence efforts of the Government in Yogyakarta.

³⁰ S. Sudjojono, *Cerita tentang Saya dan Orang-orang Sekitar Saya*, (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2017), p. 173.

Other sources mention that Sudjojono's move to Cikampek was forced by the rumor that the Dutch planned to bomb several places in Jakarta, including the Sunter area where Sudjojono resided. Hearing of this rumor, Sudjojono and his family decided to evacuate to Wikana's³¹ house in Cikampek. After staying several weeks in Cikampek, Sudjojono journeyed towards Madiun to join the youth movements.³² Painter Sudibio and critic Trisno Sumardjo – whose names were mentioned in Spanjaard's paragraph above – were at that time already residing in Madiun. They could therefore not be in Soekarno's entourage traveling towards Yogyakarta. Their biographical data show that both worked at the Railway Service in Madiun before entering the art world.³³

Dullah had a different experience. From Jakarta, he did not immediately move to Yogyakarta. After witnessing the terrible situation in Jakarta due to armed conflict, Dullah decided to move to his hometown, Solo, about 84 km from Yogyakarta. He was then recorded as a member of *Seniman Indonesia Muda (SIM)* when the artists' organization moved from Madiun to Solo. Later on, when the Yogyakarta branch of SIM was opened, Dullah moved there and worked as the secretary of the organization, chaired by Rusli.³⁴

Rusli had studied art at the Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, India, between 1932-1938, and was a contemporary of Sudjojono and Affandi. After returning from India, Rusli resided in

³¹ Wikana is a left-leaning revolutionary respected for his intense role in youth circles before the Proclamation in 1945. At the beginning of the August revolution, Wikana was one of the founders *Angkatan Pemoeda Indonesia (API)*. He was also a prominent figure of *Pesindo (Pemuda Sosialis Indonesia, Indonesia Socialist Youths)*. Wikana was later appointed as the Minister for Youth Affairs (1946-1948). For more about Wikana and his roles, see A.M. Hanafi, *Menteng 31: Membangun Jembatan Dua Angkatan*, (Jakarta: Sinar Harapan, 1997), Hardjito, *Risalah Gerakan Pemuda*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Pustaka Antara, 1952), and Adam Malik, *Riwayat Proklamasi Indonesia Agustus 1945*, (Jakarta: Widjaya, 1950), pp. 88-89.

³² See Mia Bustam, *Sudjojono dan Aku*, (Jakarta: Institut Studi Arus Informasi, 2013), pp. 61-69. I have not found objective evidence that explains why Sudjojono moved to Madiun. However, I assume the move was related to the *Dewan Pekerdja Perjuangan* (Struggle Workers Council) that moved to the city. See Hardjito, 1952, p. 48.

³³ For more about Sudibio see Harmonie Jaffar, *Serunai di Alam Damai/Serenade in Serenety: Kisah Hidup dan Karya Pelukis Surrealis Soedibio*, limited print, without year and publisher, p. 6. This very brief biography was written by Jaffar based on direct interviews with Sudibio. For Trisno Sumardjo's profile, see Korrie Layun Rampan (ed.), *Trisno Sumardjo: Pejuang Kesenian Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Arus dan BKKNI DKI Jaya, 1985). I have yet to discover biographical sources for D. Suradji and Sunindya.

³⁴ Sudarmadji, 1988, p. 19. According to Daed Joesoef, he served for a while as the head of the Yogyakarta branch of SIM – before being fired by Sudjojono. See Daed Joesoef, "Tino Sidin yang Aku Kenal" in Subroto Sm. (ed.), *Tino Sidin: Guru Gambar dan Pribadi Multidimensional*, (Yogyakarta: Lukman Offset, 2014), p. 20.

Yogyakarta and worked as an art teacher at Taman Siswa.³⁵ Rusli is remembered for his courage in lowering the Japanese flag still flying at the Gedung Agung Yogyakarta when the revolution sparked in Jakarta.³⁶ He raised the Indonesian flag in its place.³⁷ Suromo's story of leaving Jakarta is similar to Dullah's. When the security situation in Jakarta deteriorated, Suromo, who had already actively exhibited with PERSAGI before the Japanese occupation, decided to return to Solo. Not long after, he was involved with other painters in founding the SIM branch in that city.³⁸

There was no mass exodus of painters when Soekarno and his government moved from Jakarta to Yogyakarta. They gradually moved there at different times via different routes. The painter Nashar experienced a different story in evacuating to Yogyakarta. He went to the city with his family due to the deteriorating social conditions in Jakarta. After living in Jakarta, Nashar found out that Affandi had already created in his home an open studio for those who wanted to learn to paint. At Affandi's studio, Nashar again met with A. Wakidjan, Zaini, and Trubus – friends from his youth in Jakarta who studied painting together during the Japanese occupation under the tutelage of Sudjojono.³⁹ Nashar also met more senior painters like Rusli, Surono, Harijadi S., and Sudarso.

Painters from the highland Bandung – 150 km from Jakarta – had their own way of moving to Yogyakarta. In early 1946, a group of painters consisting of Hendra Gunawan, Sudjana Kerton, Soeparto, Abedy, Barli, Toerkandi and Koestiwa agreed to respond to the summons of the revolution to come to Yogyakarta. As reported by the *Lasjkar* newspaper, on the journey they painted directly on the battlefield: "With their painting equipment and each with a colt automatic, these young painters, Kartono, Soeparto, Abedy, Barli, Hendra, Koestiwa and Toerkandi recently joined the battle front in Bandung to paint the clashes in Lengkong, Cicadas, Pasir Kaliki to Lembang."⁴⁰ From Bandung, the group arrived in Tasikmalaya – about

³⁵ Trisno Sumardjo, "Rusli Pelukis Esensi" in *Zenith* magazine.

³⁶ Currently it is the *Yogyakarta Presidential Palace*.

³⁷ Tashadi, et.al., 1996, pp. 50-51.

³⁸ S. Sudjojono, "Memperkenalkan Suromo: Pelukis Rakjat dan Seniman Ulung", *Sunday Courier*, 25 April 1954, p. 19.

³⁹ Muchtaruddin Ibrahim, *Zaini – Hasil Karya dan Pengabdianannya*, (Jakarta: DepDikBud -Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional, 1982-1983), pp. 24-25.

⁴⁰ See Ida Srihadi, *Perkembangan Seni Rupa Bandung dan Sekitarnya 1945-1983* in *Berkala Seni Rupa, Sejarah seni Rupa Indonesia 1945-1983*, (Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, 1984), p. 53. See also M. Dwi Marianto, "Srigala Yang Berjalan Sendirian" in Astri Wright, et.al, *Revolusi dan Evolusi Sudjana Kerton*, (Bandung: Sanggar Luhur, 1999), pp. 94-95.

115km from Bandung – and held an exhibition. Interestingly, the temporary exhibition held between April 24th – 27th, 1946, was conducted thanks to the support of the militia organized under *Gaboengan Perdjoangan Rakyat* (People's Struggle Union). It can be seen from this case how artists assimilated with society. The call of the revolution had united them. The revolutionary situation had also changed the perspective of the painters regarding the function and role of art, as written in a newspaper at that time: "The motto of young Indonesian painters is no longer *l'art pour art* (art for art), but *l'art pour la revolution* (art for the revolution)." ⁴¹



Fig.6.4. Soekarno attended the exhibition opening on 1 May 1946 in Yogyakarta.
(Sources: *Pantja Raja*, 15 May 1946)

Photo by ANTARA
Repro by Aminudin TH Siregar

In early May 1946, a group of militia and painters arrived in Yogyakarta. Their arrival was marked with an exhibition highlighting "The Revolutionary Struggle" at the Indonesian National Committee Building. Soekarno, Muhammad Hatta, and other officials were reported to have attended the exhibition opening. The exhibition chairman told of the perseverance of the painters in recording the battles in Bandung and

⁴¹ "Seni Oentoek Revoloesi, Boekan Seni Oentoek Seni", *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 24 April 1946, p. 1.

surrounding areas and that the exhibition is a true example of the contribution of painters to the revolution: "Our painters went forward into the battle areas to create accurate and real paintings about the conflict between NICA's⁴² capitalism and our socialism." An announcement was made about two painters who perished on the battlefield, Ma'roef and Otto Noerdjihan from Tasikmalaya. These individuals were former members of a paramilitary unit known as *Gaboengan Perdjoangan Rakyat* (The United People's Struggle). Following their participation in an exhibition in Tasikmalaya, they transitioned to becoming painters. During the opening event, Soekarno emphatically praised the painters for their patriotism and active contribution to the revolution (Fig.6.4).⁴³ After the exhibition ended, some painters moved to other cities while others stayed in Yogyakarta.⁴⁴ For instance, Hendra Gunawan joined the *Seniman Masyarakat* (The People's Painters) group – a painting studio founded by Affandi. He did not return to Bandung until many years later.⁴⁵

It has previously been stated that, upon his arrival in Yogyakarta, Affandi settled in a simple house he made into his painting studio. Gradually, many other artists joined and painted there, yet there are not many sources about the activities in that studio. According to Nashar, from early 1946 the studio had a name, *Seniman Masyarakat* or *Seni Rupa Masyarakat* (Community Artists). Those who were involved in its founding included Rusli, Gunadi, Harjadi, and Affandi, who acted as its chair. The existence of *Seniman Masyarakat* only lasted a couple of months after its foundation, after which it merged and became the Yogyakarta branch of SIM.⁴⁶

Representing artists' collectives from outside Java, *Angkatan Seni Rupa Indonesia 1945 -ASRI'1945* (Indonesian Art Force) needs to be mentioned. ASRI'1945 was founded in Medan when the revolution broke out

⁴² The Dutch in Australia set up the Netherlands-Indies Civil Administration (NICA) on 3 April 1944 to reinstate civil and legal governance in the Dutch East Indies, which was under Japanese control. This decision was made as the Netherlands continued to assert its claim over Indonesia as part of its territory. For further reading see W. Preger, *Dutch Administration in the Netherlands Indies*, (Melbourne: Cheshire Pty, 1944)

⁴³ "Pertoendjoekkan Seni Loekis Perdjoengan", *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 2 April 1946.

⁴⁴ Nashar, 2002, p.21-22. In 1948, Barli returned to Bandung and continued his exploits there. See Jim Supangkat, *Titik sambung: Barli dalam Wacana Seni Lukis Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Etnobook, 1996), p. 46.

⁴⁵ Nashar, 2002, p.18. Other sources say that *Seniman Masyarakat* was founded by Affandi with Sudarso, Hariyadi, and Soedibyo. See Sardjana Sumichan (ed.), *Affandi Vol.1*, (Jakarta: Bina Lestari Budaya dan Singapore Art Museum, 2007), p. 201.

⁴⁶ See "Catalogus Steleng Seni-Lukis", Jakarta: Kementerian Penerangan Republik Indonesia, 1949, p. 1.

on Sumatra island. This group was supported by other painters such as Hasan Siregar, Ismail Daulay, Anwar SB, Syamsuddin MS, Syarif Ismail, Ibrahimsyam, Ragun Sembiring, Bahrum, and RM Aulia, as well as others.⁴⁷

Leaving Medan at the end of 1946, three people from ASRI'45, Nasjah Djamin, Daoed Joesoef, and Sam Soeharto, arrived in Yogyakarta. Their strong interest in art attracted them to Affandi's circle.⁴⁸ Yet, according to Daoed Joesoef, this group did not stay long in Yogyakarta as they had to continue their journey to Solo to help with setting up the SIM branch in that city. More than just a visit, Joesoef claimed that with Nasjah Djamin and Sam Soeharto, he was involved in drafting SIM's statute. In his memoirs, Joesoef wrote: "We are the ones who did the drafting as the senior and junior artists had no interest in organizational life. In general, they lived as bohemians, carefree, and never arrived on time for meetings."⁴⁹

Gelanggang

Not all artists moved to Yogyakarta as is suggested in common narratives. Painters like Mochtar Apin, Baharudin Marasutan, and Henk Ngantung remained in Jakarta. In mid-1946, they joined an inclusive community called *Gelanggang* (The Arena), initiated by Asrul Sani, Chairil Anwar, and Rivai Apin. Apart from them are other names such as Muhamad Balfas and Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Rosihan Anwar, Usmar Ismail, and Ida Nasution (Fig.6.4).⁵⁰

Gelanggang's reputation was widely discussed as they persistently placed universalism and humanism in Indonesian culture, instead of nationalism – as promoted by nationalist artists like Sudjojono – through what would be known as the *Surat Kepercayaan Gelanggang* (*Gelanggang's* Statement of Beliefs). This group believed that, "We are the true heirs of

⁴⁷ Sources that reveal more about this group are limited. For instance, see Amran Ekoprawoto, et al., *Sejarah Seni Rupa Sumatera Utara: Kajian Kehidupan Seni Rupa di Medan Tahun 1945 – 2005 (Sebuah Observasi Historis)*, (Banda Aceh: Balai Pelestarian Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Banda Aceh, 2007), pp. 21 and 34.

⁴⁸ Nasjah Djamin, "Affandi" in Ajip Rosidi, et al., 1978, pp. 52-53. For another version, see Lustantini Septiningsih, *Pengarang Nasjah Djamin dan Karyanya*, (Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, 1996), p. 8. See also Nasjah Djamin, *Hari-hari Akhir Si Penyair*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 2013), p.12-13.

⁴⁹ Daoed Joesoef, *Rekam Jejak Anak Tiga Zaman*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2017), p.86-87. To this date I have yet to discover the Constitution of this organization.

⁵⁰ D.S. Moeljanto dan Taufiq Ismail, *Prahara Budaya: Kilas-balik Ofensif Lekra/PKI Dkk.*, (Bandung: Mizan dan HU Republika, 1995), p. 31. See also Si Oema "Perkoempoelan Baroe: Gelanggang" in *Saät*, 18 Mei 1948 dan Sitor Situmorang, "Gelanggang" in *Mimbar Indonesia*, 4 March 1950.

world culture, and we must perpetuate this culture in our own way. We have risen from the masses, and the viewpoint of the masses is a medley from which healthy new worlds can be fashioned. Our Indonesian-ness is not solely due to our tanned skin, black hair, or temple bones that jut forward, but more by what is expressed by our hearts and minds. We will not give one word to sum up the culture of Indonesia. When we talk about Indonesian culture, we don't think about polishing the results of old culture until they are shiny and proud, but we think about a healthy new cultural life.”⁵¹ This manifesto was dated 18 February 1950 and first published on 23 October 1950 in the weekly magazine *Siasat*.



Fig.6.5. The *Gelanggang*, 1948.
(Source: <https://geheugen.delpher.nl>)

Photo by Charles Breijer

⁵¹ “Kami adalah ahli waris yang sah dari kebudayaan dunia dan kebudayaan ini kami teruskan dengan cara kami sendiri. kami lahir dari kalangan orang-banyak dan pengertian rakyat bagi kami adalah kumpulan campur-baur dari mana dunia-dunia baru yang sehat dapat dilahirkan. Ke-Indonesiaan kami tidak semata-mata karena kulit kami yang sawo matang, rambut kami yang hitam atau tulang pelipis kami yang menjorok ke depan, tetapi lebih banyak oleh apa yang diutarakan oleh wujud pernyataan hati dan pikiran kami.”

In the 1950s, *Gelanggang* exponents chose their paths. Mochtar Apin joined Fine Art-ITB, which is known for its modernism. Henk Ngantung, Rivai Apin, and Pramoedya Ananta Toer joined the People's Cultural Institute or LEKRA (Institute of People's Painters), which had a populist ideology. Asrul Sani and Usmar Ismail initiated *Lembaga Seni Budaya Muslimin Indonesia* or LESBUMI (Indonesian Muslim Cultural Artists Institute) under Nahdlatul Ulama - Indonesia's largest Islamic institution. At the start of the 1950s, the humanist universalism recommended by *Gelanggang* would meet with strong opposition from the LEKRA group.⁵²

Seniman Indonesia Muda

This section explains more of the background of *Seniman Indonesia Muda* (Artists of Young Indonesia)⁵³ or SIM as an arts organization that was very influential in its time separately from *Pelukis Rakjat* (People's Painters). In this sub-chapter, I will not discuss *Pelukis Rakjat* at length, as historiographers have already provided sufficient information about this association.⁵⁴

There are not many historical sources about SIM. I will start by emphasizing that conventional historiography has raised the perception that SIM was merely a *Sanggar* (similar to Studio), so the group's movements were limited and domestic. For instance, Spanjaard assumed that SIM was a "studio in charge of documenting the fight for independence in the form of leaflets and paintings".⁵⁵ I argue that SIM's role in art history is more than a studio. It can be seen as an "art institute" with many agendas. The grand scheme of SIM was the decolonization of Indonesia's people, art, and culture to create a new "Indonesian art." The spirit of SIM was to chip

⁵² For instance, see Klara Akustia, "Kepada Seniman Universil" in Aoh. K. Hadimadja (ed.), *Beberapa Paham Angkatan '45*, (Jakarta: Tintamas, 1952), p. 82-91. A general description of the debate between the humanist universalists and Lekra can be seen in Yahaya Ismail, *Pertumbuhan, Perkembangan dan Kejatuhan Lekra di Indonesia (Satu tinjauan dari aspek sosio-budaya)*, (Kualalumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, 1972), pp. 23-34 and D.S. Moeljanto and Taufiq Ismail, *Prahara Budaya: Kilas-balik Ofensif Lekra/PKI Dkk.*, (Bandung: Mizan dan HU Republika, 1995).

⁵³ When considering how to be more authentic, I followed the editor of *Seniman* magazine's use of the "Artists Association of Young Indonesia" to translate "Seniman Indonesia Muda" (see Figure 6.8).

⁵⁴ See Claire Holt, 1967, p. 201-224 and M. Dwi Marianto "Revolusi dan Evolusi Sudjana Kerton – Srigala Yang Berjalan Sendirian" in Astri Wright, M. Dwi Marianto, and Hilda Soemantri, *Revolusi dan Evolusi Sudjana Kerton*, (Bandung: Sanggar Luhur Bandung, 1999), pp. 93-95.

⁵⁵ Spanjaard, 1998, pp. 117 - 124. See also Burhan, 2013, pp. 55-59, and Kusnadi, 1990-1991, p. 93.

away at the rigid, conservative heritage of feudal culture.⁵⁶ Compared to PTPI, which was focusing on propaganda, SIM could be seen as a cross-field artist movement. Its members produced posters and designed exhibition programs, organized performing arts, created songs, and constructed art discourse by publishing the magazine *Seniman* (Artist).

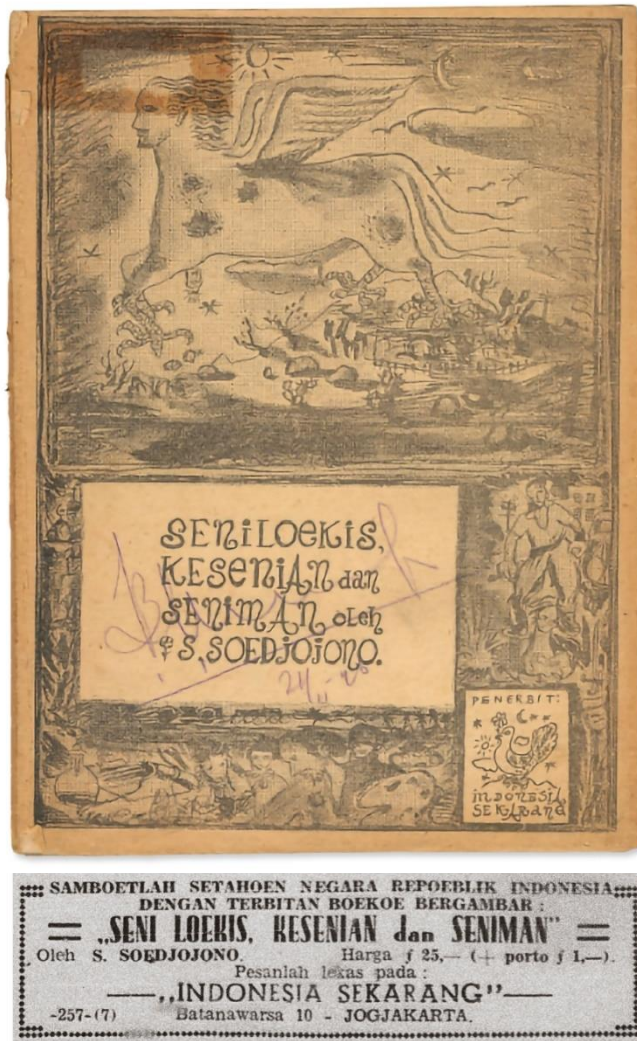


FIGURE 6.6.
Sudjojono book and its advertisement in *Kedaulatan Rakyat*'s newspaper, 31 July 1946.

Collection of Perpustakaan s.14 and Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

⁵⁶ Aoh Kartahadimadja, "Kesenian Indonesia Sebelum dan Sesudah Perang", *Mimbar Indonesia*, 10 January 1948. Also see Trisno Sumardjo, "Art, Spirit, and People", 1947.

In his opening remarks at a SIM event in May 1946, Sudjojono argued that the development of visual art in Indonesia could generally only occur in conjunction with other literary and performing arts. He was convinced that SIM's strong point was the practice of crossing between creating art collectively and sustaining individual artworks. This was to achieve SIM's goal: Indonesian art is honored on the same level as other nations' art. Sudjojono also stated: "Art as the soul of a nation must be taken care of, especially for the Indonesian nation whose state is still young, so that its art is on the same level as other countries."⁵⁷

From Sudjojono's speech in May 1946, I will continue the SIM story until August, marked by the first exhibition of SIM in commemoration of one year of Indonesia's independence to show its essential role. Unfortunately, we have little information about the details of this exhibition, which was held between 17 and 22 August 1946.⁵⁸ Despite this, the exhibition, which has never been reported in the standard narrative, also offers essential context regarding publishing a compilation book of Sudjojono's writings entitled *Seni Loekis, Kesenian, dan Seniman* (Painting, Art, and Artist). Based on the advertisement I found in a newspaper, the book was published in late July 1946 (Fig.6.6),⁵⁹ revealing that it had been part of the SIM exhibition.

Printed modestly and slightly blurry, today the book *Seni Loekis, Kesenian, dan Seniman* has a vital place in the history of modern Indonesian art. The book, edited by Dullah, is now the primary reference of many historiographers, especially as concerns Sudjojono's artistic credo about "seni adalah jiwa kètok" (Art is a Visible Soul), truth being more important than beauty, his appeal to painters to find the style of Indonesian painting, his criticism of Raden Saleh or his criticism of Mooi Indië paintings - most of which I have quoted in earlier chapters in this thesis. I believe it is essential to pay attention to this book edited by Dullah because he does not explain the origins of the articles. Thirteen articles in this book were published separately and at different times. After conducting research, I discovered that the articles were taken from three periods: Dutch colonization (7 items), Japanese occupation (5 items), and the Revolution (1 article). Therefore, this context of the published texts is crucial for those who will refer to this book to avoid historical anachronisms.

⁵⁷ *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 6 May 1946.

⁵⁸ "Stelling Seni Loekis", *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 16 August 1946, p. 2. I have not found other sources to corroborate the exhibition's narrative.

⁵⁹ See the advertisement for this book in *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 31 July 1946, p. 2.

Another thing that I think is interesting regarding the book's publication is the difference in how it was received. The Dutch magazine *Uitzicht* welcomed the book enthusiastically, while the Indonesian side, through *Inzicht* magazine, adopted the opposite attitude. V.N., a Dutch reviewer in *Uitzicht*, discussed the book enthusiastically and outlined the affirmation. He stated that Sudjojono's efforts to link painting, art, and nationalism are outstanding and will not be in vain in finding Indonesian painting styles, which are still ongoing.⁶⁰ In contrast, the book was reviewed with subtle satire in *Inzicht*, a weekly republican-run magazine competing with *Uitzicht*. The editor criticizes Sudjojono's credo that "truth is more important than beauty" as an over-generalization and repeated proposition, but at least appreciates that Sudjojono is able to influence young people. I suspect that the culture section of this magazine was held by *Gelanggang* artists.⁶¹

The story of SIM can begin with Sudjojono's move from Jakarta to Madiun. It was in this city that Sudjojono, together with Trisno Sumardjo, Sudibio, Sunindyo, and D. Suradji⁶² founded SIM.⁶³ One version says that SIM was founded on 5 May 1946 with Sudjojono as the general chairman.⁶⁴ According to another, written by SIM's co-founder Trisno Sumardjo, it was founded in April 1946.⁶⁵ In his articles written in 1949, Suromo confirmed that SIM was launched on 14 April 1946, which seems to be the more accurate version.⁶⁶ The placement of the word "*seniman* (artist)" before the word "Indonesia" and "*Muda* (young)" in the SIM acronym is a representation of "artists of the new nation and state called Indonesia in its [infancy]." Therefore, SIM was not merely a collective of "young artists", but also included "senior artists" among its ranks.

⁶⁰ V.N., "Kunstenaarschap, Kunstenaar, Nationalisme", *Uitzicht*, 1e Jaargang No. 48, 11 December 1946, pp. 4-5.

⁶¹ N.N., "Een Schilder Schrijft", *Uitzicht*, No.46., 1 January 1947, p. 12.

⁶² Sudjojono, 2017, p. 173.

⁶³ It was a mistake if Tashadi claimed that SIM was founded in Yogyakarta. In his essay on artists and the revolution, Sri Margana repeats the same error by referring to Tashadi when explaining the founding of SIM. Margana was also less careful when writing that SIM was founded in 1945. See Tashadi, et al., *Partisipasi Seniman dalam Perjuangan Kemerdekaan Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta*, (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 1996), pp. 89-90. See also Sri Margana, "Corat-corek Revolusi: Seniman dalam Revolusi Indonesia di Yogyakarta" in Sri Margana, et.al., *Gelora Di Tanah Raja: Yogyakarta Pada Masa Revolusi 1945-1950*, (Yogyakarta: Dinas Kebudayaan Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, 2017), pp. 46-47.

⁶⁴ *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 6 May 1946.

⁶⁵ Trisno Sumardjo, "Art, Spirit, and People", *Seniman*, Th. I. No.2, May 1947.

⁶⁶ Suromo, "Timbul dan Tumbuhnya Seni Lukis Indonesia" in *Mimbar Indonesia*, 27 July 1949.

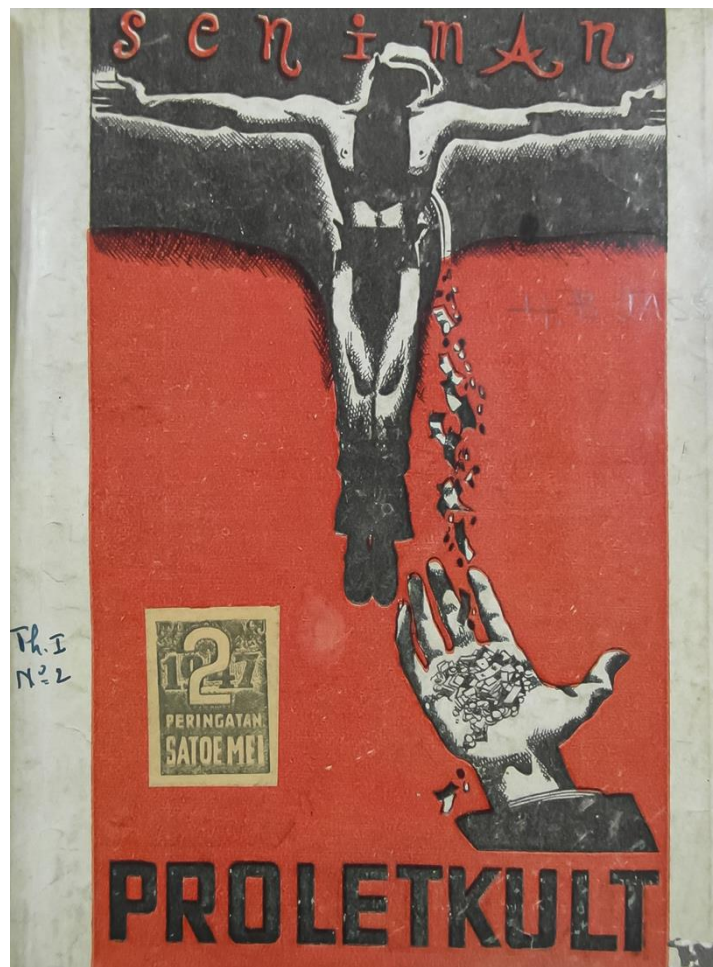


FIGURE 6.7.
Magazine *Seniman*.

Collection of H.B. Jassin's Library Jakarta.
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

Aside from being an organization, SIM can be seen as a collective manifestation of revolutionary artists who, together with the people, would create a new culture for contemporary Indonesia. To a certain extent, according to Daoed Joesoef – he was a member of SIM –, Sudjojono wanted to build SIM along the lines of *Proletkult* in the USSR.⁶⁷ This view is not without basis, considering the close relations Sudjojono had with communist figures in the government like Wikana.

Another ex-member of SIM, Nashar, remembered when all SIM artists received a letter about placing SIM under the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia -PKI). This letter offered to publicise the choice of the artists. The plan to absorb SIM into communism failed because most members disapproved. Because of this, continued Nashar, several changes were instituted in the organization, especially for commissioned work for posters and allowances for artists. These changes occurred because “Sudjojono failed to communize SIM.”⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Daoed Joesoef, 2017, p. 87.

⁶⁸ Nashar, 2002, p. 42.

Amidst the uncertainty, the tensions among painters over “communizing SIM” brought about a transformative shift in the fine arts world. A striking example was in 1947, when Affandi, Soedarso, and Hendra Gunawan, disenchanted with SIM, took a bold step and formed *Pelukis Rakjat* (People's Painters). This new group seemed to be driven by a profound yearning for freedom and a desire to be intimately connected with society, a departure from the confines of ideological elitism.⁶⁹

Later on, when moving from Madiun to Solo – about 60 km from Yogyakarta, SIM published a bi-monthly magazine, *Seniman (Artist)*⁷⁰ which was relatively slim and printed in modest quality (Fig. 6.7). Despite this, the magazine already represented various interests by providing columns for essays, poetry, caricatures, short stories, music, and anecdotes or gossip. The *Seniman* is an essential source for art history today since it provides an overview of artist activities during a period of revolution, despite having not received serious attention from art history writers.⁷¹ Studying the magazine, which was published for around a year (1947-1948), *Seniman* posted the activities of SIM in the various art fields and – in every edition – always displayed reproductions of paintings, drawings, sketches, sculptures, and wood carvings. Therefore, like a “museum without walls,” this magazine has documented the works of many artists. Many of those artworks are now untraceable.

Through *Seniman*, I discovered SIM artists' ability to cover the international orientation, another issue regarding this organization that is neglected in the common narrative. For instance, in the May 1947 edition, the magazine published an article by Basuki Resobowo of the German graphic artist Käthe Kollwitz with two reproductions of her work. In the same edition, Abdul Salam wrote about the life of an artist in Russia.⁷² Naturally, the discussion of international art in the magazine was not to compare Indonesian and overseas art. The artists of SIM were well aware of

⁶⁹ About *Pelukis Rakjat* see Claire Holt, 1967, pp. 217-224. See also documents of the group's Constitution in Burhan, 2013, p.140. Counting Trubus, Soedarso, Kusnadi, Djoni Trisno, Batara Lubis, Itji Tarmizi, and several others in its membership, *Pelukis Rakjat* in the 1950s played an important role not only in painting but also in the development of modern sculpture, monuments, and reliefs.

⁷⁰ Kusnadi was mistaken when mentioning the magazine's name as “Proletkult”. See Kusnadi, 1990-1991, p. 93.

⁷¹ Among historiographers, I discovered that Helena Spanjaard and Imam Boechori Zainuddin attempted to briefly describe the magazine's significance. For instance, Spanjaard quoted Trisno Sumardjo about “SIM's ideology” and the ripping up of a Resobowo painting at an exhibition. See Spanjaard, 1998, pp. 120-121 and Imam Buchoeri Zainuddin, 1966, p. 64.

⁷² See both their articles in *Seniman*, Th.1, No. 2, May 1947, pp. 53-54 and 66-68.

their inability to compare with Western artists. They were targeting to cast a broad intellectual and artistic net and become part of the development of international art. Several articles in the magazine were written in English as a means of furthering this purpose.

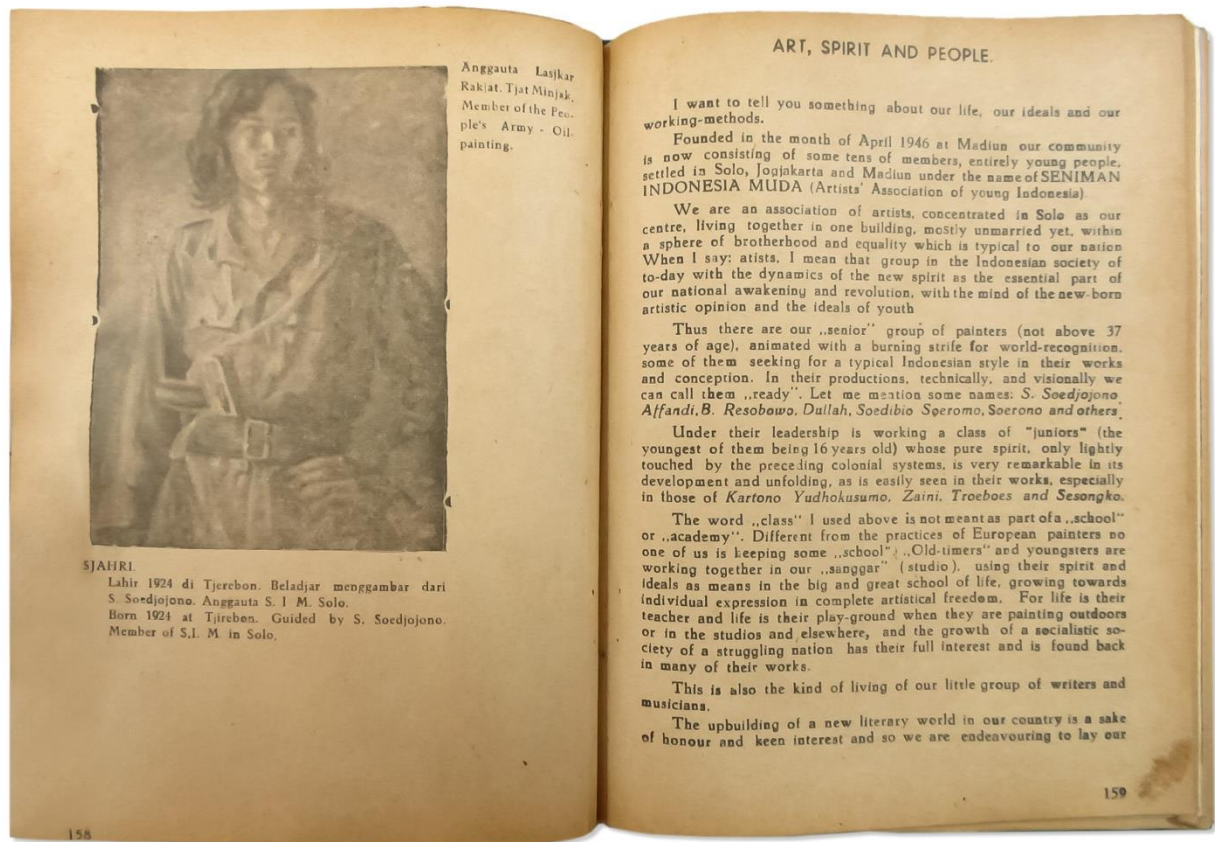


FIGURE 6.8.
Trisno Sumardjo, *Art, Spirit, and People*.
(Source: *Seniman*, November 1947)

Collection of H.B. Jassin's Library Jakarta
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

The editorial staff of *Seniman* once published a special edition welcoming the World Federation of Democratic Youth (W.F.D.Y) conference – a post-war youth organization spreading anti-fascism, anti-imperialism, and leftist beliefs. Written in English, Trisno Sumardjo introduced several names, the vision, and the programs of SIM in an article that was obviously directed towards international audiences (Fig.6.8).

Accompanying this article, a reproduction of a sketch of Olga Chechetkina's face (a Soviet journalist from South East Asia) also indicated the journalist's meeting with the artists. The W.F.D.Y delegation, Olga Chechetkina, Jean Latussier (France), and Rayco Tomovick (Yugoslavia), did indeed visit Indonesia for about three weeks between May and June 1947.⁷³

Still, in the same edition, *Seniman* included a letter by Sudjojono as the chairman of SIM and representative of Indonesian artists via a radiogram. Dated 28 May 1946, the English-language radiogram was sent to Bernard Shaw in the United Kingdom. Sudjojono wished to express the hope of Indonesian artists who wanted to expand their network and sympathy for the revolution from overseas intellectuals, writers, and artists. He also asked Bernard Shaw to recommunicate the radiogram to Charlie Chaplin, Pablo Picasso, Kees van Dongen, Frank Capra, Pearl S. Buck, Ilya Ehrenburg, Tsuguharu Foujita, Walt Disney, Beniamino Gigli, Leopold Anthony Stokowski, Lin Yu Tang, Sarojini Naidu, and Jan Sluyter. Sudjojono revealed his belief that the art circles would sympathize with Indonesia's revolution: "We are convinced every artist in the whole world loves freedom, humanism, and truth. It is strange to us, as artists in Indonesia, why our colleagues in the world as a whole do not protest against those countries that are still oppressing groups of people on this beautiful earth" (Fig. 6.9).⁷⁴

The following copy was a radiogram sent on 17 May 1947 related to sending a package of *Seniman* magazines, watercolors, and poetry to the Indonesia-Australia Association in Australia. Similar to the one sent to Bernard Shaw, the substance of this English-language radiogram to Australia was meant to gain wider sympathy and build a network between Indonesian and Australian artists. The radiogram opened with an introduction of SIM's profile and an expression of gratitude for the moral and material support provided by Australia to Indonesia against "Dutch aggression and imperialism." Aside from the call for solidarity, the exciting part of this radiogram written in English was the firm statement that reflected the openness and progressiveness of Indonesian artists: "It is the duty of all artists in the world to contribute to this struggle in using their art as a medium. For art must be the possession for the peoples again and it is

⁷³ Regarding the visit by the W.D.F.Y delegation, see Larisa Efimova, "Did the Soviet Union instruct Southeast Asian communists to revolt? New Russian evidence on the Calcutta Youth Conference of February 1948" in the *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, Vol. 40, Special Issue 3: The Origins of the Southeast Asian Cold War, October 2009, pp. 449 – 469. See also Hardjito, *Risalah Gerakan Pemuda*, (Jakarta: Pustaka Antara, 1942), p. 226.

⁷⁴ "From the Archives of *Seniman* Indonesia Muda", *Seniman*, No. 5, 1 November 1947.

only victory in this great fight that will cause the development of art to the utmost degree. So, we are doing in Indonesia and so we hope our Australian colleagues will do.”⁷⁵

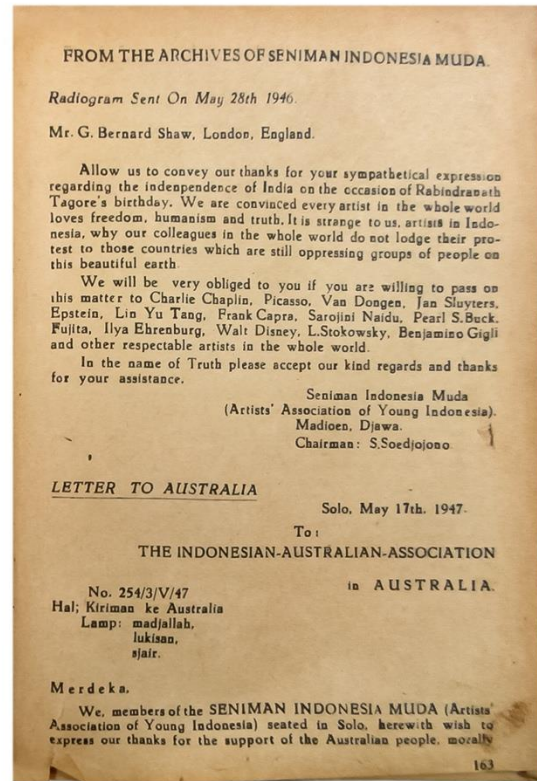


FIGURE 6.9.
S. Sudjojono, Radiogram sent on 28 May 1946 to
Mr. G. Bernard Shaw.
(Source: *Seniman*, November 1947)

Collection of H.B. Jassin's Library Jakarta
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

In about 1947, SIM moved from Madiun to Solo. The only source relevant for when the move to Solo happened is Nashar's memoirs. He remembered that the action occurred around January 1947. Apart from that, I have not found any information about when precisely the SIM headquarters was moving. Nashar's statements align with the information I read in the *Seniman* magazine, where it states that as late as December 1946, SIM still held an exhibition in Madiun. Despite SIM moving to Solo because the call of the *Biro Perdjoeangan* (Struggle Bureau) to support propaganda, art activities at the SIM Madiun branch continued.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ "Letter to Australia", *Seniman*, No. 5., 1 November 1947.

⁷⁶ Nashar, *Nashar oleh Nashar*, (Yogyakarta: Yayasan Bentang Budaya, 2002), p.36.

Very few sources are available to inform what happened in Madiun then. However, I would like to present a momentous event that occurred before SIM moved to Solo. This was the second SIM exhibition held from 4 to 7 December 1946 in Madiun. This following incident is never revealed in the standard narrative.

At that time, SIM was a revolutionary progressive institution, a climax of the artists' collective initiated by Sudjojono and his friends during the Dutch colonial period. They advocated for Government programs, gave performances to the public, and promoted their revolutionary spirit. On the other hand, SIM was committed to bringing art closer to society and inviting participation. Ironically, SIM artists had to confront their Madiun audience, who reacted significantly to one of the paintings exhibited. SIM presented a nude painting by Basuki Resobowo until one day they found the canvas had been repeatedly slashed with a sharp implement. No culprit was found, nor was the reason discovered. The SIM artists could only speculate that the damage was done as nudity remained taboo in certain circles. This first act of art vandalism to modern painting in Indonesia harmed the vision of progressiveness and freedom of art campaigned by the SIM's artists.

Due to this event, the editors of *Seniman* magazine issued an article defending Basuki Resobowo. This magazine also criticized the orthodoxy of culture and regretted the conservatism of society living in false moralism. "Is this not the bent morale, the sham? This kind of morality must be vanquished from Indonesian society now! Artists will take part, and even lead the way!"⁷⁷ *Seniman* eagerly called for the people to not be hypocritical by thinking that the female nude in Basuki Resobowo's painting was meant to induce lust (Fig.6.10). Instead, the woman in the picture represented social issues; therefore, the nudity was about suffering, fragility, poverty, and victimization. Accordingly, continued *Seniman*, society must be capable of discerning art from movie posters that purposefully offer eroticism.

The slashing of Basuki Resobowo's nude painting exposes a fundamental issue with their avant-gardism. While they demonstrated a broad and internationally oriented knowledge of art and painted with a modern passion and ambition on a par with Western artists, they seemingly neglected the readiness of their people for the spirit of openness or autonomy in modern art. The destruction of Resobowo's painting is a stark reminder

⁷⁷ "Seniman Contra Moral Palsae – Perihal Gambar Telandjang", *Seniman*, Th.1. No.1, March 1947, p.14.

that art censorship in Indonesia is a complex process, involving the regulation and control of artistic content, often driven by moral, political, or religious reasons. This recurring tension between artists and society over the interpretation of morality underscores the multifaceted nature of art censorship and its profound implications.⁷⁸



FIGURE 6.10.
Basuki Resobowo, *Telandjang*, 1946.
Source: *Seniman*, March 1947.

Collection of H.B. Jassin's Library Jakarta
Repro by Aminudin TH Siregar

⁷⁸ For instance, in 2005, Agus Suwage and Davi Linggar's installation work entitled *Pink Swing Park* was judged to parade nudity and pornography by the Islamic Defenders Front (Front Pembela Islam - FPI), which demanded the closure of a controversial art installation called *Pink Swing Park* in an official art biennale. This sparked a national debate in the Indonesian contemporary art scene. As a result of the media's disorder, manipulation of facts, and controversy, the biennale's curator, Jim Supangkat, decided to close it. For further reading on the polemic on this case, see Enin Supriyanto, "Salah Paham dan Takut Pada Kebebasan?", *Kompas*, 3 June 2006, p. 42, Jim Supangkat, "Nabi-isme, Ideologi Seni, Kebebasan Ekspresi", *Kompas*, 2 July 2006, p. 26, Jim Supangkat, "Lagi-lagi Tidak Paham" in *Kompas*, 30 July 2006, p. 19, Hendro Wiyanto, "Tentang Manifes Seni Rupa", *Kompas*, 13 August 2006, p. 28, Enin Supriyanto, "Lagi-lagi Salah Paham...", *Kompas*, 16 Agustus 2006, p. 28, Enin Supriyanto, "Memang Tidak (Se)Paham", *Kompas*, 27 August 2006, p. 29.

Back to Solo. At its new location in Solo, SIM became a formal organization supported by the government through the *Biro Perdjoengan*, led by Djokosoejono, under Amir Sjarifuddin's Department of Defense.⁷⁹ In her memoirs, Mia Bustam wrote that SIM's membership in Solo reached around forty art workers with 250 squad guards from *Biro Perdjoengan*. Despite the bureau assigning SIM to produce propaganda works to galvanize the people's spirit, every member had the freedom to create individual work.⁸⁰ When in 1947 Sudjojono left SIM Solo for Yogyakarta, his position as chairman was taken over by Resobowo.⁸¹

As well as being the republic's capital, Yogyakarta seemed to be the only place to have a presentable exhibition space. Therefore, despite SIM having its headquarters in Solo, the artists held their grand exhibition from 26 May to 2 June 1947 at Balai Mataram Yogyakarta. This third SIM exhibition, which displayed many paintings with revolutionary themes, was considered a success, as supported by the *Biro Perdjoengan*.⁸²

As reported by the newspaper *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, the exhibition, featuring around 65 works, immediately captured the attention of international visitors who happened to be in Yogyakarta in those months. Rayco Tomovick, part of the W.F.D.Y. delegation, was impressed and confessed that the works in the exhibition were created by "not only artists but geniuses." Even European artists would find it difficult to create artwork amid battle. Tomovick also did not forget the fact that the Indonesian painters in the exhibition "had no formal art education, and painted in the heat of battle and in a state of deprivation." Olga Chechetkina had an equally inspiring opinion – she declared that "in Europe, artists are isolated from society, but here they have a strong connection [with society]."⁸³ The *Nieuwe courant* covered it as an "excellent exhibition." Despite that, the newspaper regretted how "art was still used to serve specific political goals, and the painters realize the connection between fate and the demands of the

⁷⁹ See Harry Poeze, Tan Malaka, *Gerakan Kiri, dan Revolusi Indonesia Jilid 2: Maret 1946 – Maret 1947*, (Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia, 2009), p. 39.

⁸⁰ Mia Bustam, 2013, p. 82.

⁸¹ Nashar, 2002, p. 42. In Yogyakarta, Sudjojono worked as the head of the art department at the secretariat for the Ministry of Youth Affairs (SMNUP). According to Srihadi Sudarsono, those involved in SMNUP were Abdul Salam, Kartono Yudhokusumo, Soerono, and Srihadi Sudarsono himself. See Srihadi Soedarsono, "Saya dan Seni Lukis Indonesia", makalah ceramah di Teater Salihara, 15 September 2015.

⁸² "Steleng Seni Loekis", *Merdeka*, 28 May 1947, p. 1.

⁸³ "Sekitar Tentaonstelling Perdjoangan", *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 2 June 1946, p. 2. See also "Seni Loekis", *Merdeka*, 9 June 1947, p.2.

people.⁸⁴ The success of the SIM 1947 Exhibition was also measured by attendance, reportedly numbering 5,000 people every day.⁸⁵ The next major SIM exhibition was *Steleng Seni Lukis*, which took place in January 1950 at the Seni Sono Gallery in Yogyakarta (Fig. 6.11).

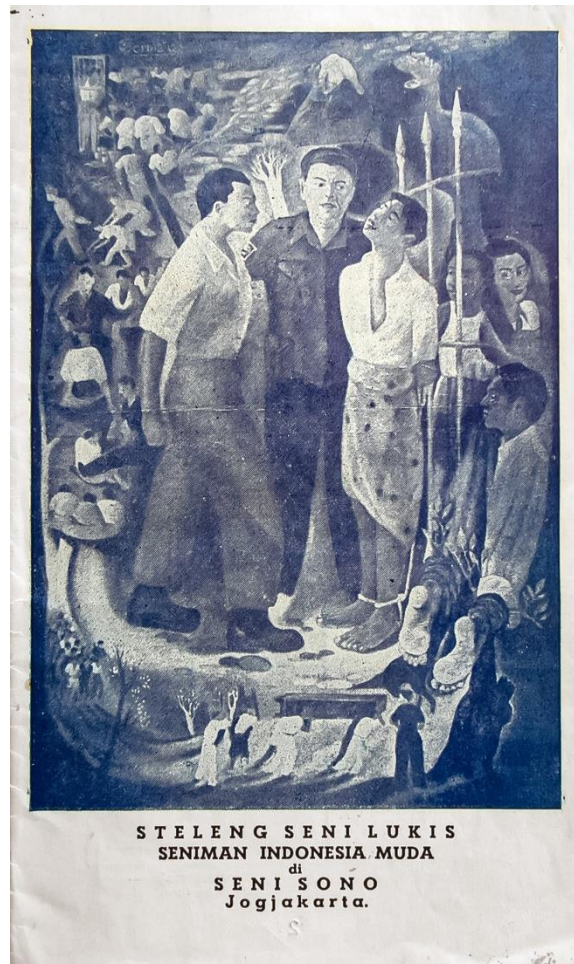


FIGURE 6.11.
Exhibition brochure of SIM.

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

⁸⁴ "Raaklijnen aan de sfeer van Djokja: Men wil vrij zijn, doch men erkent hulp van Nederland nodig te hebben", *Nieuwe courant*, 3 June 1947, p. 3.

⁸⁵ "Sekitar Tentoonstelling Perdjoangan", *Kedaulatan Rakjat*, 2 June 1946, p. 2.

Since its formation, SIM had envisioned transcending borders and establishing international solidarity networks during revolutionary periods. So, for this reason, SIM was not just a *sanggar* (studio), as many writers on the history of modern Indonesian art perceive. SIM painters and critics acted as historians and archivists of the process of the revolution, capturing the essence of the transformative period through their artistic activities. Their intelligence and passion enabled them to document the events, emotions, and struggles carefully even though, as will be discussed below, many SIM collections were destroyed or lost because they were confiscated following the second Dutch military aggression. SIM continued to be active until the mid-1950s before declining towards 1960.

Revolution Goes to Amsterdam and Accusations of Betrayal

The roles of Agus Djaya and Otto Djaya must be discussed, as they introduced Indonesian modern art and expanded the struggle for independence to Europe.⁸⁶ Compared to other artists, the Djaya brothers answered the call of the revolution differently. They were not registered in *Seniman Merdeka*, *Seniman Masyarakat*, *Pelukis Rakyat* nor *Seniman Indonesia Muda*. After the proclamation on 17 August 1945, Agus Djaya and his brother Otto moved to Sukabumi – about 112 kilometers from Jakarta. In this city, they joined the national army, as they had ranked in the military. At the time, Sukabumi was a strategic route connecting Jakarta to Bandung. The Allies used this route to free Dutch prisoners from Japanese camps. It was also in the area around Sukabumi that the Djaya brothers were involved in guerrilla operations.⁸⁷ Towards the end of 1945, the Djaya brothers founded the *Balai Kesenian Oemoem* (BKO), or Public Arts Hall, in that city.⁸⁸

BKO was asked to become a coordinator by the National Cultural Conference Preparation Body (Committee for National Cultural Conference

⁸⁶ Aside from the Djaya brothers, the activities of painter Salim representing Indonesia are also important. In October 1949, he held a solo exhibition in Amsterdam. See Yazir Marzuki, *Pelukis Salim*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Djambatan, 1983), pp. 52-54. See also “De Indonesiër Salim”, *De Gooi-en Eemlander: nieuws- en advertentieblad*, 21 October 1949. When revolution broke, Salim wanted to return home, but his financial condition did not permit it. Aside from that, as an Indonesian painter who had long resided in Paris, he felt that he could be a representative of Indonesian artists in Europe. See “Kesan-kesan Salim” in *Konfrontasi*, No. 2, March-April 1956, p. 34.

⁸⁷ Solichin Salam, *Agus Djaya dan Sejarah Seni Lukis Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Pusat Studi dan Penelitian Islam, 1994), p. 20. Agus Djaya’s latest military rank was colonel.

⁸⁸ Willem Sanberg, “Voorword” in *Katalog Pameran Agoes Djaya - Otto Djaya*, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1947.

Preparation, BPKKN), which planned to hold a large meeting to discuss national cultural issues. They advertised in the *Merdeka* newspaper to call artists, writers, and intellectuals from throughout Java to visit Sukabumi before 30 December 1945. Prominent names expected to be present at Sukabumi were among them: Ki Hajar Dewantra, Abu Hanifah, Armin Pane, Basuki Abdullah, Affandi, Sudjojono, Amir Sjarifuddin, Prijono, Poerbotjoroko, Usmar Ismail, Djajengasmoro, Rusli, Hendra Gunawan, Barli, Popo Iskandar, Adam Malik, Muhammad Yamin, Kusbini, and Mangunsarkoro.⁸⁹

I still have not found a source to reveal what happened to the Djaya brothers after the conference in Sukabumi. However, the available reports say that they came to Yogyakarta and only stayed a while before continuing to Jakarta for their exhibition held in mid-February 1947 at the Gajah Museum (now National Museum of Indonesia).⁹⁰ The show was reportedly a success and received so many accolades⁹¹ that the exhibition was extended.⁹²

The editor of *Uitzicht* magazine praised their exhibition as verification that the East accepted the West without being contradictory. Modern Indonesian painting has shown how artists express themselves with a revolutionary spirit irrespective of traditions and academic rules. Eventually, through the Djaya brothers' exhibition, the development of modern Indonesian painting would find its own way.⁹³

Governor-General Hubertus van Mook and part of his cabinet, K.F.J. Verboeket and P.J.A. Idenburg, visited the exhibition, and each purchased a

⁸⁹ "Seroean Kepada Penggemar dan Ahli Keboedajaan: Berkoempoel di Soekaboemi Tanggal 30 Desember", *Merdeka*, 26 December 1945, p. 2. I am still looking for sources to reveal the activities and membership of the center, and whether Agus Djaya was the only one who had a role there. Moreover, I need confirmation of who could have attended that meeting. However, several days after the announcement, *Merdeka* published the meeting results referred to Abu Hanifah and Armijn Pane's ideas. The Sukabumi's forum urged the Indonesian government to notice and act on the recommendation. Some of the main proposals include establishing a cultural academy, building a national museum and library, organizing a national cultural council, among several others. See "Keboedajaan Indonesia Ditilik dari Soedoet Koeltoer-Politis" in *Merdeka*, 5 January 1946, p. 2.

⁹⁰ "Stelling Seni Loekis", *Merdeka*, 5 February 1947, p. 2. It is reported that the Djaya brother's exhibition was held between 16 – 26 February 1947.

⁹¹ A. W. Smit, "Expositie-Djaya", *Het dagblad: uitgave van de Nederlandsche Dagbladpers te Batavia*, 22 March 1947, p. 2 and "Loekisan Agus dan Otto Djaya" in *Merdeka*, 27 February 1947, p. 2.

⁹² "Agoes dan Otto Djaya: Steleng Diperpanjang", *Merdeka*, 27 February 1947, p. 2. See also G.R., "Impressie Steleng Seni Loekis Agoes dan Otto" in *Siasat*, 8 March 1947, p. 10.

⁹³ Bd., "Indonesische Schilders: Agoes en Otto Djaya", *Uitzicht*, 2e Jaargang No. 8, 19 February 1947, p. 10. See also the Djaya's brother painting reproduction in this issue. In his review on *Pantja Raja*, Rivai Apin praised the work of the Djaya Brothers for "showing the visions, directions and objectives of the people." See Rivai Apin, "Doea Peloekis Moeda Kita", *Pantja Raja*, No. 2, TH. II, 1 April 1947, p. 337.

painting by the brothers. Others, like journalist Henk van Randwijk from *Vrij Nederland*, also bought a painting.⁹⁴ In mid-1947, several months after the exhibition, the Djaya brothers arrived in Amsterdam, bringing with them hundreds of paintings by themselves and other Indonesian painters. They would not return to Indonesia until mid-1949.⁹⁵

The Djaya brothers came to the Netherlands as Malino scholarship recipients.⁹⁶ With this “van Mook scholarship” status, the reputation of the Djaya brothers would, later on, be damaged in the eyes of nationalist artists back home. However, Otto Djaya would say that his journey to the Netherlands was with the support of President Soekarno and the Minister of Defense and not because of the Malino scholarship. Aside from that, the Indonesian government sent the Djaya brothers as painters and art representatives, not as military representatives – although they both had military ranks.

Moreover, their artistic status made it easy to conduct propaganda about Indonesian independence through art. The government also recommended the Djaya brothers to study art and culture during their stay in the Netherlands. They were indeed recorded at *Rijksakademie van Beedende Kunsten*, Amsterdam, as being scholarship recipients.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ “Van Mook Mengoendjoengi Steleng Loekisan”, *Merdeka*, 28 February 1947, p. 2. According to Ada van Randwijk-Henstra, Otto Djaya donated the painting as he sympathized with Henk van Randwijk who opposed Dutch military aggression in Indonesia. See Peter Schumacher, “Het geschenk van Otto Djaya aan Vrij Nederland”, 2015. The article can be accessed at <https://javapost.nl/2015/11/15/het-geschenk-van-otto-djaya-aan-vrij-nederland/>.

⁹⁵ It was reported that Agus Djaya and Otto Djaya arrived in Indonesia on 18 December 1949. See M.M. “Seorang Seniman Pulang dari Merantau: M.M. Menginterview Agus Djaya” in *Madjalah Merdeka*, 21 January 1950, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁶ The purpose of the Malino scholarship was to provide opportunities for Indonesian students to pursue studies in the Netherlands. The scholarship was a result of the Malino conference held in South Sulawesi in 15 – 25 July 1946, led by Governor General Hubertus Johannes Van Mook. Its purpose was for the planning of the formation of a federation state in Indonesia. About the Malino conference, see W.A. van Goudoever, *Malino maakt historie: een overzichtelijke bewerking van notulen en tekstuele redevoeringen ter Conferentie van Malino 15-25 Juli 1946*, (Batavia: Regeerings Voorlichtings Dienst, 1946). The Djaya brothers are recorded to be part of the scholarship in the files of the Commissionaer of Hindia affairs (Commissariaat voor Indische Zaken): “De Malino studenten, waartoe de gebroeders Djaya eveneens behoren, staan onder toezicht van mij en door mij worden alle financiële zaken voor hen behandeld (the Malino students, including the Djaya brothers, are under my supervision, and all financial issues are undertaken by me).” See Britte Sloothaak, “Tempoe Doeloe? Kunstenaars, Guerrillasstrijders en Spijbelaars”, 2018. This article can be accessed at <https://www.stedelijk.nl/nl/digdeeper/tempo-doeloe-agus-en-otto-djaya#slideshow-6778>.

⁹⁷ According to the institute’s records, the Djaya brothers were recorded as students at *Rijksakademie van Beedende Kunsten* between 1947 and 1948. Despite this, information on their activities at the academy remains scarce. See the files at Britte Sloothaak, 2018.

Periodically, they had to write reports to Soekarno and the government about the developments of art and culture in the Netherlands to inspire Indonesians.⁹⁸

Agus Djaya admitted that he and his younger brother were assigned to conduct psychological warfare (psywar) and cultural diplomacy in Europe.⁹⁹ Whatever their assignment from the Indonesian government, their activism during three years in Europe resulted in several important exhibitions, which have not, however, been sufficiently covered in the historiography of art. One historical milestone was the exhibition of the Djaya brothers at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, held from 10 October – 10 November 1947.¹⁰⁰

The appearance of works by the Djaya brothers at the Stedelijk Museum became the discussion of the town. Jakob Willem Hendrik Veenstra wrote some interesting perspectives in culture magazine *Oriëntatie*. He noted that living painters allowed to exhibit their artworks at the museum meant that they were acknowledged and respected. Another factor that was of no less importance was the ongoing political situation. The exhibition of the Djaya brothers took place at the peak of the conflict in Indonesia's struggle for independence from the Dutch.¹⁰¹

Naturally, not all Djaya brother's exhibition reviews were in sympathy. In his article, Veenstra also discussed critics from various media. These art critics, without any exception, always took issue with Western influence, especially from painting techniques. Yet, sharp and superior critique came from J.M. Prange from the *Het Parool* newspaper. According to Prange, the exhibition was merely organized because of "the graciousness

⁹⁸ Inge-Marie Holst, *Dunia Sang Otto Djaya 1916 – 2002*, (Jakarta: Hexart Publishing, 2016), pp. 33-34. R. Samsudin, who was the Minister of Information for Indonesia, assigned the Djaya brothers to "discover a method so that Indonesian art and culture moves forward and is respected on the international stage." See "Letter from R. Samsudin to Agus Djaya dated 19 October 1949", Agus Djaya's personal archive.

⁹⁹ Solichin Salam, 1994, p. 20.

¹⁰⁰ News of the opening of the Djaya brother's exhibition at the Stedelijk Museum was covered by mass media from the Netherlands and Indonesia. Among them, see *De waarheid*, 8 October 1947, *Het Parool*, 29 October 1947, *De Tijd: dagblad voor Nederland*, 18 October 1947, *De vlam: weekblad voor vrijheid en cultuur*, jrg 3, 1947, no 46, 21 November 1947, dan *De locomotief: Samarangsch handels-en advertentieblad*, 13 October 1947. During June- September 2018, Stedelijk Museum held a Djaya brothers' exhibition with the theme "The Djaya Brothers: Revolusi in the Stedelijk". Further reading about the exhibition see <https://www.stedelijk.nl/en/exhibitions/the-djaya-brothers-revolusi-at-the-stedelijk>.

¹⁰¹ J.H.W. Veenstra, "Gebroeders Djaya in het Amsterdamse Stedelijk Museum" in *Oriëntatie; cultureel maandblad*, jrg 1, 1947, no. 3, 22 December 1947, p. 5.

of the Netherlands towards both the painters,” even though the quality of the paintings “het peil van talloze Nederlandse schilders niet te boven gaat (are not at the level of a multitude of Dutch painters).”¹⁰² The promising lines at least comment that “the works of the Djaya brothers are still in the process of discovering aesthetics that suit them.”¹⁰³ At home, a perception surfaced that the works of the Djaya brothers were underappreciated by the Dutch public.¹⁰⁴

I maintain that there are still many aspects that critics failed to see in examining the Djaya brothers' paintings. Otto Djaya's themes are relatively easy to interpret. He painted the guerrillas, rallies representing the people's revolutionary forces, warrior figures, and many more. His paintings convey the message of the Indonesian revolution as he experienced it before he went to the Netherlands.¹⁰⁵

Interestingly, Dutch critics failed to address the Indonesian revolution in their reviews despite the explicit images presented by Agus Djaya. Djaya, drawing from classical Indian themes he had explored before the war, created figurative paintings that symbolized the conflict between Indonesia and the Netherlands. Using wayang characters, he vividly portrays the famous Bharatayudha - a “civil war” scene from the epic Mahabharata.¹⁰⁶ While the media may have missed the messages, the Djaya brothers effectively used their art to broadcast the eruption of a massive revolution in Indonesia, leaving an indelible mark on the political landscape.

Having the Djaya brothers' exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum reflected the progressive political stance of the museum's director, Willem Sandberg. He dared to take an opposing position to that generally taken by politicians in the Netherlands at the time. Sandberg wrote the foreword and

¹⁰² J.H.W. Veenstra, 1947, p. 7.

¹⁰³ “Tentoonstellingen in de hoofdstad Indonesische schilders in Stedelijk Museum Delfts kunstenaar bij De Boer”, *De Tijd: dagblad voor Nederland*, 18 October 1947, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ M.M. “Agus dan Otto Djaya di Eropah: Kurang Mendapat Penghargaan di Negeri Belanda” in *Madjallah Merdeka*, 20 August 1949, p.16.

¹⁰⁵ Based on the list of works in the catalog, Otto Djaya's “revolution series” paintings were among others: Pemberontak (Revolutionnaires) 1947, Pahlawan Goegoer (Gevallen Strijder) 1947, Rapat di Soemedang (Volksmeeting op Soemedang) 1946, Pemberontakan (Typen uit de Revolutie) 1946, Rapat Raksasa di Koenigian (Volksmeeting op Koenigian) 1946, Lasjkar (Strijders) 1946, Pradjoerit Berbaris (Soldaten op Mars) 1946, and Pradjoerit Pemoeda Sosialis (Type uit de Indonesische Socialistische Jeugdorganisatie) 1946. See Agoes Djaya – Otto Djaya Exhibition Catalog, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, 1947.

¹⁰⁶ The two strongest symbolic paintings in this exhibition were Baratha-Juddha (*Naar de Hindoe-Javaanse epos de Baratha Juddha*) 1945 and Bisma Djatoeh (*Val van Bisma, held uit Baratha-Juddha*) 1945.

designed the exhibition catalog, which, despite its modest design, indicates his sympathies towards Indonesia. The catalog's cover was designed with bright touches of red and white, which obviously represented the Indonesian flag (Fig. 6.12).



FIGURE 6.12.
The exhibition catalogue of the Djaya brothers'
catalog exhibition at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam.

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

Sandberg's written introduction to the Djaya brothers was sympathetic and respectful. Among other things, he explored the thoughts of Agus Djaya about art and Western influence on Indonesian art. He wrote: "Every true art is timeless, and a true expression of art from Indonesia has its right to exist, separate from Western art."¹⁰⁷ For Sandberg, the debut exhibition of the Djaya brothers in Europe – also as the first post-war exhibition from a nation going through decolonization – must be seen as an "invaluable contribution from the nation and its people: Indonesia."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Willem Sandberg, 1947, p. 3. "Iedere waarachtige kunst is tijdloos en een waarachtige kunstuiting van Indonesië heeft haarbestaansrecht, los van Westerse kunst."

¹⁰⁸ Willem Sandberg, 1947, p. 4. "Tot slot behoeft het verder geen betoog, dat hun thans tentoongestelde werk, onbewust een enorme bijdrage insluit van de naam van hun land en volk, de

Sandberg's support for the exhibition created the perception that Indonesia as a new nation had modern painters and widened the scope of the "Indonesian Revolution" to Europe.

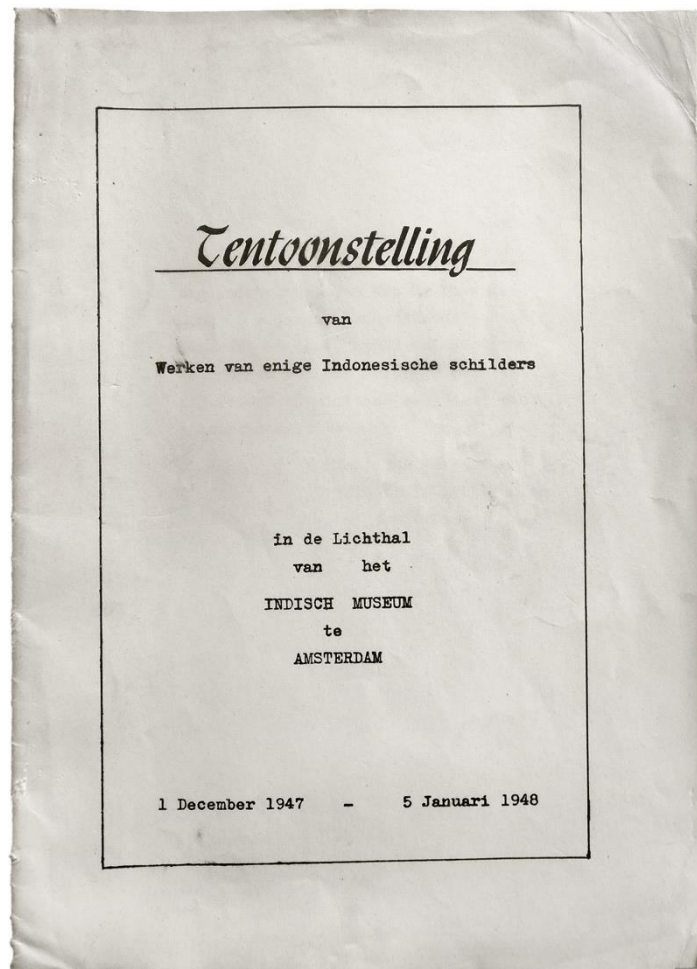


FIGURE 6.13. The exhibition catalog of Indonesian painters in Indisch Museum Amsterdam.

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

Indonesiërs."

Not long after the Djaya brothers sounded the bell of revolution at the Stedelijk Museum, they promoted Indonesian modern art to the Indisch Museum in Amsterdam. This exhibition reportedly received a convivial reception amongst the Dutch public¹⁰⁹ and was livelier as it also featured works by other painters brought over by the Djaya brothers from Indonesia. This exhibition, which took place over a month from 1 December 1947 to 5 January 1948, presented 67 works from Affandi, Basuki Resobowo, Dullah, S. Derachman, Sudarso, S. Sudjojono, Zaini, R.M. Suharto, O. Nurjehan, Kartono Yudokusumo, Mochtar Apin, including the Djaya brothers. In a brief foreword, the museum announced that the exhibition was meant to display the scale of the progress of modern Indonesian painting to the European public (Fig.6.13).¹¹⁰

In his foreword, Agus Djaya emphasized that the collection brought over from Indonesia did not include the best works. He argued that Indonesia's unstable political situation did not allow him to have more presentable artworks. Aside from that, he continued, the war situation decreased his communications with the artists, who were dispersed in several areas. In the same foreword, Djaya told of the short journey of Indonesian new painting and the vital roles of Affandi and Sudjojono as an "unwavering driving force."¹¹¹

Criticism was vented about the exhibition as a whole. An article titled "Indonesische Schilderkunst" stated that all the painters were still searching to express their artistic strengths. "They gained their inspiration from the desire to rediscover their own social and cultural values. Technically, they oriented themselves to Western European art, while still attempting to be connected to the spirit of their own cultural lands." This review expressed great expectations for painters' passion and hard work. However, it ended with the sentence, "Only time will tell whether a unique Indonesian style may be found, or whether it fits with what is called international art."¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ "Expositie Indonesische Schilderkunst", *Nieuwe courant*, 17 December 1947, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ Catalog of *Tentoonstelling van Werken van enige Indonesische schilders*, Indisch Museum te Amsterdam, 1947.

¹¹¹ Agoes Djaya, Voorwoord in the catalog of *Tentoonstelling van Werken van enige Indonesische schilders*, Indisch Museum te Amsterdam, 1947.

¹¹² "Indonesische Schilderkunst", *De Locomotief: Samarangsch handels en advertentie-blad*, 17 December 1947, p. 2. "Uit de begeerte de eigen sociale en culturele waarden te hervinden putten zij hun inspiratie. Schildertechnisch heeft men zich georiënteerd op de West-Europese Kunst, terwijl men tevens voeling poogt te houden met de geest van eigen culturele bodem. Waar zoveel liefde voor de kunst en zoveel noeste arbeid valt te constateren, is er voor de toekomst iets schoons te verwachten. Of een eigen Indonesische stijl zal worden gevonden, dan wel een die zich aan past aan de zogenaamde

While the Djaya brothers tried to propagate modern art and the Indonesian revolution to a broader European public, their Indonesian friends in Java mocked them as dishonest persons, as in the *Seniman* magazine edition of December 1947, published in its anecdote column.

In that issue, the editors published a story directed towards the deceitful personality of Agus Djaya because he “held the principle of *mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur* (*the world wants to be deceived, so let it be deceived*).” The writer of the anecdote, not identified, told of Agus Djaya’s agility in handling himself in front of important officials. This was, among other things, reflected in how well he dressed compared to the generally disheveled looks of other painters. The writer of anecdote column stated that when the revolution broke, Agus Djaya pushed the government for authority to form a militia in Sukabumi, which was approved. With that mandate, Djaya received a military rank and a car. According to the writer, the problem was that the militia in Sukabumi was never formed, and Agus Djaya still used the provided car.

Stories about his shiftiness continued – apparently, someone whispered an idea about building an art museum, which interested Agus Djaya. After some hustling, Djaya eventually obtained the candidacy for building the museum from the mayor of Sukabumi. Not only that, he asked for funds from the Indonesian government to support the museum’s collection. In short, with a large sum of money, he collected and purchased paintings from several painters, including “buying his own paintings.” What was promised by Agus Djaya ended in disappointment as the museum remained empty, and thus the Indonesian art museum never came to be.¹¹³

Seniman magazine's editor also set his sights on Otto Djaya as a painter who liked to present himself as someone important and close to circles of power. He was also assumed to be tricky, taking advantage of the situation for his plan.¹¹⁴

These accusations reflect the crisis of trust the artists had towards the integrity of the Djaya brothers in the development of Indonesian modern art. Instead, the brothers were suspected of putting their own careers and reputations first. On the other hand, the wide disparity of opportunity for artist careers could be read as simple envy amongst artists. This reality is quite understandable – when painters in Java were physically in battle while

internationale kunst, zal de tijd moeten uitwijken.”

¹¹³ *Seniman*, Th.I, No. 6, December 1947, p. 224. Another anecdote described Agus Djaya as ambitious.

¹¹⁴ *Seniman*, Th.2., No. 1, March 1948, p. 35.

upholding the sovereignty of modern art, overseas other painters chased their ambition for a reputation in Europe. The ridicule was not only directed at the Djaya brothers. The way that Basuki Abdullah curried favor with the Dutch, left his nation's revolution, and chose to reside in Europe is a similar case.¹¹⁵

In the *Brochure Kesenian*, Sudjojono openly expressed his disappointment towards Agus Djaya and Basuki Abdullah¹¹⁶ who, according to him, went to the Netherlands "using Netherlands Indies Civil Administration (NICA) money."¹¹⁷ Sudjojono did not believe that Basuki Abdullah achieved success in the Netherlands. However, the newspaper *Nieuwe Apeldoornsche* reported that Abdullah was well received for his exhibition.¹¹⁸

Sudjojono seemed to be at his peak of annoyance towards Agus Djaya. In his eyes, Agus Djaya was a *verrader* (traitor). Sudjojono believed: "Agus wrote in 'Kroniek van kunst en cultuur' on 19 December 1948. Its contents: 'the desire to be led by the West.' I do not know whether Agus has heard or not on the radio about the Dutch attack to the Republic. If he has heard, then he as a son of Indonesia is now a *verrader* in that narrative. If he has not heard, then the universe will make him a *verrader* anyway as he wrote on the same date of the Dutch attack."¹¹⁹

To be branded a traitor in revolutionary times was a serious matter. With such a label, a person would easily be judged disloyal towards his nation and state and risk his life. Did Agus Djaya actually say "the desire to be led by the West"? Did he not, with his brother, bring the spirit of the Indonesian revolution to Europe? What did he write?

¹¹⁵ *Seniman*, Th.1. No.3, July 1947, p. 115.

¹¹⁶ In the Netherlands, Basuki Abdullah received a commission to paint Queen Juliana. News of this can be found in various newspapers, among them see G.H. von Faber, "Naar een Nieuwe Indonesische Schilderkunst: Over Basuki Abdullah en de Jengoren", *De locomotief: Samarangsch handels- en advertentie-blad*, 14 December 1949, "Koningin Poseert voor Jaavanse Kunstschilder", *Nieuwe Apeldoornsche courant*, 3 January 1949, "Koningin Poseert voor Jaavanse Kunstschilder", *Trouw*, 4 Januari 1949, "Koningin Poseert voor Jaavanse Kunstschilder", *Bredasche courant*, 3 January 1949, and "Koningin Poseert voor Jaavanse Kunstschilder", *De Nederlander*, 4 January 1949.

¹¹⁷ *Seniman* magazine, through a caricature made by Abdulsalam, made fun of Basuki Abdullah. It was rumored that in the Netherlands, Basuki Abdullah painted a portrait of Conrad Emile Lambert Helfrich, the commander of the Dutch Navy. The latter was assigned to Indonesia during the revolution. See *Seniman*, Th.I, No.3, July 1947, back cover.

¹¹⁸ See "Raden F. Basoeki Abdullah Exposeert", *Nieuwe Apeldoornsche courant*, 3 February 1947, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ Interview between D.R. Huyung with S. Sudjojono, 1949, p. 21. The "Dutch attacks" in Sudjojono's statement is the "Military Aggression" in Indonesia's historiography or "Operation Kraai" in the Netherlands version. For sources, see the following footnotes.

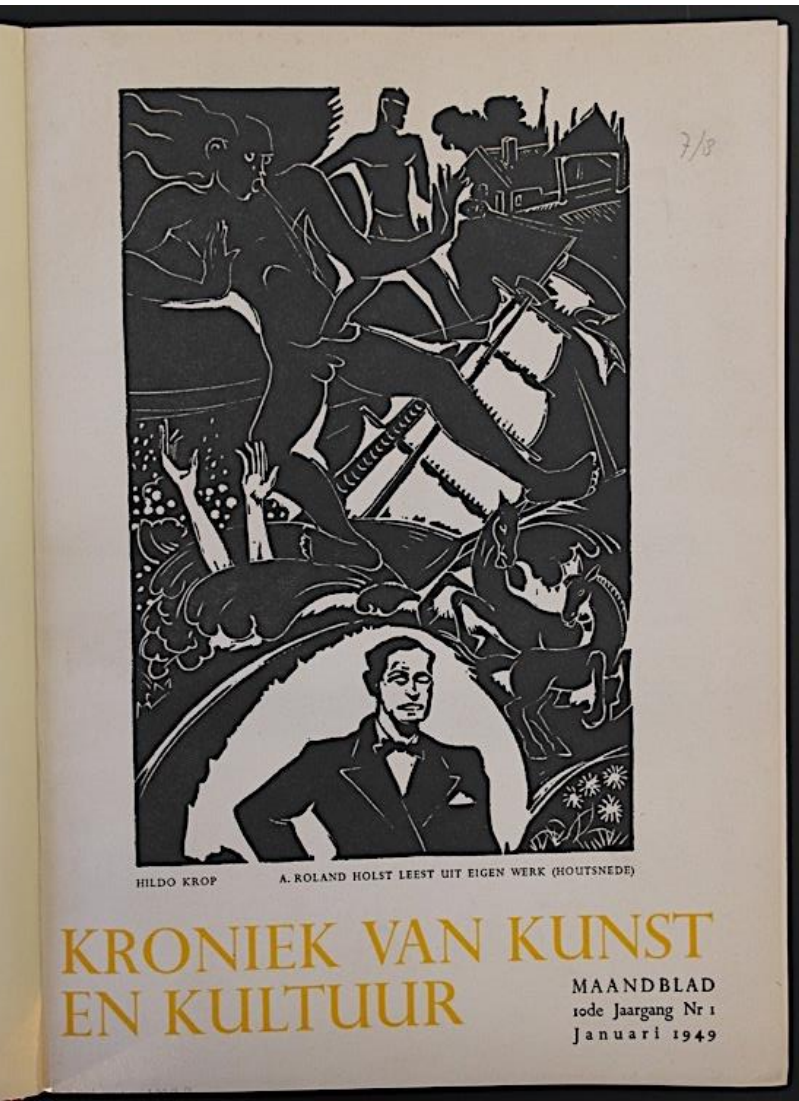


FIGURE 6.14.
Cover of *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur*, January 1949 and Agus Djaya's first page of his essay.

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

It is difficult to confirm whether or not Sudjojono had read Agus Djaya's entire article before accusing him of betrayal. After some searching, I found the magazine (Fig. 6.14). Agus Djaya's article was published in the monthly magazine *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur* (Chronicle of Art and Culture) January 1949 edition, not on 19 December 1948 as mentioned by Sudjojono. Therefore, Sudjojono's accusation was incorrect to say that "Agus Djaya's betrayal" happened on the same day the Dutch attacked Yogyakarta on the above-mentioned date.

An odd and mysterious line of information is interesting for further analysis. At the end of Agus Djaya's article, I found a footnote that stated: "Dit artikel werd geschreven vóór 19 December 1948 (this article was written

before 19 December, 1948).” This is an odd addition and seems to have been added by the magazine editor to show that Agus Djaya had already written his article before the military aggression. Another possibility is that the paper could only be published in the January 1949 edition despite Agus Djaya having already sent it to the editors long before. I have yet to uncover information to explain this oddity.

Aside from the last oddity, I think Agus Djaya’s article, “*Gedachten over culturele samenwerking*” (Thoughts on Cultural Collaboration), needed to be reviewed. The essence of Djaya’s theme is to explore the possibility of cultural collaboration between Indonesia and the Netherlands. He opened his article with the statement that collaboration between both nations is difficult considering the current political volatility. However, in Djaya’s eyes, cultural collaboration is a sympathetic idea as long as the collaboration between countries is borne from “common needs, as a vehicle to benefit both parties, without any risk of loss for any one party.”¹²⁰

Djaya reminded that Indonesian artists had a cultural collaboration with the Japanese through *Keimin Bunka Shidōsho* (Institute for People’s Education and Cultural Guidance). In the beginning, the collaboration created a force that ended with “a flow of blood and tears (*een stroom van bloed en tranen*).”¹²¹ Would cultural collaboration between Indonesia and the Netherlands emerge as a different, progressive force? How can we depict the beneficial collaborational aspects between the Netherlands, representing European culture on one side, and Indonesia on the other? Will such collaboration be helpful? And what would it offer? Agus Djaya did not provide answers to his own questions. Instead, he estimated that any issue regarding cultural collaboration was still in the “planning stage (*deze samenwerking nog in een stadium van louter plannen*).”¹²²

¹²⁰ Agus Djaya, “Gedachten over culturele samenwerking” in *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur*, 10^{de} Jaargang, Nr. 1, januari 1949, p. 16. “Desondanks komt het denkbeeld mij wel sympathiek voor, althans wanneer dit werkelijk een soort samenwerking betreft die voortspuit uit een spontane wederzijdse behoefte, als een middel tot cultureel ge win voor beide partijen, zonder dat één hunner mettertijd de kans loopt er de dupe van te worden.”

¹²¹ Agus Djaya, 1949, p. 16. “Indonesiërs hebben immers nog niet zo lang geleden zulk een ervaring opgedaan tijdens de Japanse bezetting toen met een werkelijk royaal gebaar de 'culturele samenwerking' werd beoogd en bekostigd. Slogans als 'kerdja bersama-sama' (samenwerken) en 'Asia kembali ke bangsa Asia' (Azië terug aan de Aziaten) plus de 'soedara toea'-complexen (ouderebroercomplexen) hadden toen een magische kracht, althans in de beginphase. Dat deze samenwerking later in de wandeling een 'Picasso-mop' werd, is niet te verwonderen (met alle respect voor Picasso). Ze is geëindigd in een stroom van bloed en tranen.”

¹²² Agus Djaya, 1949, p. 16. “Hoe kunnen wij ons nu deze kostbare facet van samenwerking tussen Nederland als representant van cultureel Europa enerzijds en Indonesië anderzijds voorstellen? Er

Published in Amsterdam since 1935, *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur* was a prestigious art magazine of its time. It was oriented towards the cutting edge of contemporary art and culture in the Netherlands and beyond.¹²³ Agus Djaya seriously used this opportunity to narrate his ideas to the magazine's readers, for instance, about the Indonesian experience of absorbing Western culture through Dutch colonialism. He felt the need to revisit the dynamics of the colonial art scene in the 1930s when intellectuals argued about the direction of Indonesian culture – whether to return to traditional culture or embrace Western modernity. According to Agus Djaya, this argument did nothing to progress Indonesian culture. “Today, we are limping on both foundations,” he says.¹²⁴ Through his experiences, Agus Djaya himself felt the weaknesses and strengths of both Eastern and Western culture.

Then, seemingly like a postmodernist evangelist, Agus Djaya criticized Western modernism, which he thought to be “in a dilemma as it is dispirited with itself. The pursuit of the West towards science and technology, which was supposed to make society better and more prosperous, is in reality causing chaos with unpredictable results.” This modern disease has made Western men transform themselves into “super robots.”

Interestingly, Agus Djaya reminded his readers that the renowned European intellectuals like Johan Huizinga, Karl Mannheim, Leo Tolstoy, Adriaan Roland Holst, José Ortega y Gasset, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Arthur Schopenhauer already realized the dilemma of modernity. He therefore called for the “West to sincerely acknowledge the chaos they are experiencing.”¹²⁵

With the condition of the disease of modernity, Agus Djaya then questioned, “So, will East and West go head-to-head (confront each other) foolishly and uselessly, culturally gesticulating, or will they slide like two trains together?” Despite sounding pessimistic, Djaya considered that all the

treden twee fundamentele kwesties naar voren: (1) Is culturele samenwerking mogelijk en nuttig? (2) Wat hebben ze elkaar te bieden?”

¹²³ For more about *Kroniek van Kunst en Cultuur*, see Hestia Bavelaar, *Kroniek van kunst en cultuur: geschiedenis van een tijdschrift 1935-1965*, (Leiden: Primavera Press, 1998).

¹²⁴ Agus Djaya, 1949, p. 17. “Wij hinken op twee fundamenteën”.

¹²⁵ Agus Djaya, 1949, p. 19. “Deze drang is problematisch geworden, waarvoor moeilijk een bevredigende oplossing te vinden is, sinds de ontdekking, dat het culturele westen in een wanhopig dilemma met zichzelf is gewikkeld. De atomische vlucht der wetenschap en techniek, die redelijkerwijs de Europese gemeenschap een betere, meer welvarende wereld had moeten geven heeft juist een chaos veroorzaakt, waarvan het einde nog niet kan worden overzien. De westerse mens heeft zich omgetoverd tot een 'super-robot' en bezit nog niet de juiste 'mantrams' om zijn 'opmars naar de maan' te bezweren. Eminente figuren in Europa als Huizinga, Mannheim, Tolstoi, Roland Holst, Y Gasset, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer en vele anderen hebben dit aangevoeld. Velen trachten de 'mantrams' te zoeken in het oosten: bezinning. Het westen moet tot bezinning komen!”

changes occurring in the world at that time provided the correct momentum to connect the East and the West in a cultural collaboration. He proposed that UNESCO play a part as a promotor. Despite this, continued Djaya, the success of cultural collaboration between nations naturally cannot solely be dependent on UNESCO. Its success depends on both parties entering the collaboration.¹²⁶

After reading Agus Djaya's article, I did not uncover any assertion that explicitly stated "the desire to be led by the West" – as accused by Sudjojono. On the contrary, Djaya placed himself as an observer in the middle, being equally critical towards the East and the West and the chances of collaboration. The only paragraph that might potentially trigger a perception of "Agus Djaya's betrayal," in my view, is perhaps the following:

I admit that an intensive introduction to Western culture guided by a healthy critical mind is the path for the Indonesia people to come to a reorientation. History has repeatedly shown that the Indonesian people have enough creative capacity to make it possible for them to reach fresh, new conceptions through the knowledge and impressions obtained, as long as there is enough stimulus to do so.¹²⁷

Resonances of Agus Djaya's thoughts regarding Western Indonesia or Dutch-Indonesian collaboration spread to Indonesia. As far as I could uncover, the newspaper *Het nieuwsblad voor Sumatra* once published an article titled "Culturele samenwerking van Indonesië en Nederland" (Cultural collaboration between Indonesia and the Netherlands). By underlining several essential points, the review in the newspaper from Sumatra reacted positively to Agus Djaya's ideas regarding cultural collaboration.¹²⁸ The type of collaboration might be able to be viewed from something that occurred in

¹²⁶ Agus Djaya, 1949, p. 19. "Zullen dus nu oost en west, dwaas en nutteloos, cultureel gesticulerend, lijnrecht elkaar ingaan, of zullen ze als twee rails glad op langs elkaar glijden? Het wordt waarlijk hoog tijd, dat oost en west elkaar vinden, en wel in de culturele samenwerking. De Unesco is in deze geest als promotor opgekomen; of dit goede resultaten afwerpt, hangt uiteraard niet alleen van de Unesco af, maar van ons allen".

¹²⁷ Agus Djaya, 1949, p. 18. "Ik geef toe, dat intensieve kennismaking met de westerse cultuur, geleid door een gezonde critische zin, de weg is voor het Indonesische volk om te komen tot een heroriëntatie. De geschiedenis heeft herhaaldelijk aangetoond, dat het Indonesische volk over voldoende creatief vermogen beschikt, dat het in staat kan stellen om via de verworven kennis en indrukken tot nieuwe frisse concepties te komen, mits de prikkel hiertoe in voldoende mate aanwezig is."

¹²⁸ "Culturele samenwerking van Indonesië en Nederland" in *Het nieuwsblad voor Sumatra*, 19 March 1949, p. 3.

Makassar, West Sulawesi. In March 1949, the city saw the opening of the *Stichting Cultureel Centrum Oost-Indonesië* (Center for Eastern Indonesian Culture Foundation or *Jajasan Pusat Kebudayaan Indonesia Timur* - JPKIT). Among its goals was to build a dynamic landscape of painting. To create a conducive environment, the foundation which collaborated with the Dutch government would facilitate an art museum and gallery. What is also quite interesting was the cosmopolitan vision of the foundation, which “must create relationships with Leiden, Amsterdam, Paris, London, New York, Sidney, Cairo, and New Delhi; become the conservator of old culture, the center of new culture, and be the meeting point of world culture.”¹²⁹

The cultural cooperation of institutions planned for the revolutionary period between Indonesia and the Netherlands did not last long - including JPKIT.¹³⁰ Likewise, STICUSA (*Stichting voor Culturele Samenwerking*), the collaborative model between the two countries which was very active, was dissolved in January 1956.¹³¹ An education-oriented arts institution inherited from this period and still surviving today is the Art Academy in Bandung, founded in 1947.

The Making of the First Art Academy

During the revolutionary turmoil, a well-known art academy was established in Bandung. However, the official book *Sejarah Seni Rupa Indonesia* (History of Indonesian Art) tends to emphasize the founding of the art academy in Yogyakarta, known as ASRI, in January 1950. This emphasis is attributed to Yogyakarta's significance as the center of government during the Revolution, which played a critical role in establishing ASRI. Meanwhile, when talking about the art academy in Bandung, the book only briefly mentions Ries Mulder's name, thus creating the impression that he is the principal founder of the academy.¹³² Another official government book, *Perjalanan Seni Rupa*

¹²⁹ Further on the goals and vision of the foundation, see Badan Penyelenggara Pusat Kebudayaan Indonesia Timur, *Jajasan Pusat Kebudayaan Negara Indonesia Timur Makassar*, (Makassar: BPPKIT, 1949), p. 12.

¹³⁰ Further reading for the development of the cultural foundation, see Barbara Hatley, “Creating culture for the new nation South Sulawesi, 1950-1965” in Jennifer Lindsay and Maya H.T. Liem (ed.), *Heirs to World Culture: Being Indonesian, 1950-1965*, (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 343-368.

¹³¹ For STICUSA, see Liesbeth Dolk, “An entangled affair STICUSA and Indonesia, 1948-1956” in Jennifer Lindsay and Maya H.T. Liem (ed.), 2012, pp. 57-74.

¹³² See Bambang Suwondo (ed.), *Sejarah Seni Rupa Indonesia*, (Jakarta: Proyek Penelitian dan Pencatatan Kebudayaan Daerah - Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan, Tahun Anggaran 1976/1977), pp. 194-200.

Indonesia, also offers a more significant portion in narrating the founding of ASRI-Yogyakarta. The book provides only one paragraph about the art academy in Bandung, and even then, it does not explain who the founder was or the information the reader needs to know.¹³³



FIGURE 6.15. Front cover of A Year Book 1949-1950.

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

In his academic research, Agus Burhan wants to update this narrative. However, he mistakenly wrote that Bandung Academy's founders are Simon Admiraal, M.N. Mulder, and Sjaf'e'i Soemardja.¹³⁴ Meanwhile, Claire Holt mentioned only M.N. Mulder - also familiarly called Ries Mulder- although she devotes quite a long page to discussing the academy's role on the national

¹³³ See Agus Dermawan T. "Seni Lukis Kontemporer Indonesia 1950-1990" in Mochtar Kusuma - Atmadja, et.al (eds.), *Perjalanan Seni Rupa Indonesia: Dari Zaman Prasejarah Hingga Masa Kini*, (Jakarta: Panitia Pameran KIAS 1990-1991), p.105

¹³⁴ M. Agus Burhan, 2013, p. 72.

scene.¹³⁵ The story of the founding of the Art Academy in Bandung, which has now become the Faculty of Art and Design at the Bandung Institute of Technology (Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain-ITB or FSRD-ITB), is not widely revealed (Fig.6.15). This section briefly talks about FSRD-ITB, which the standard narrative has not touched.

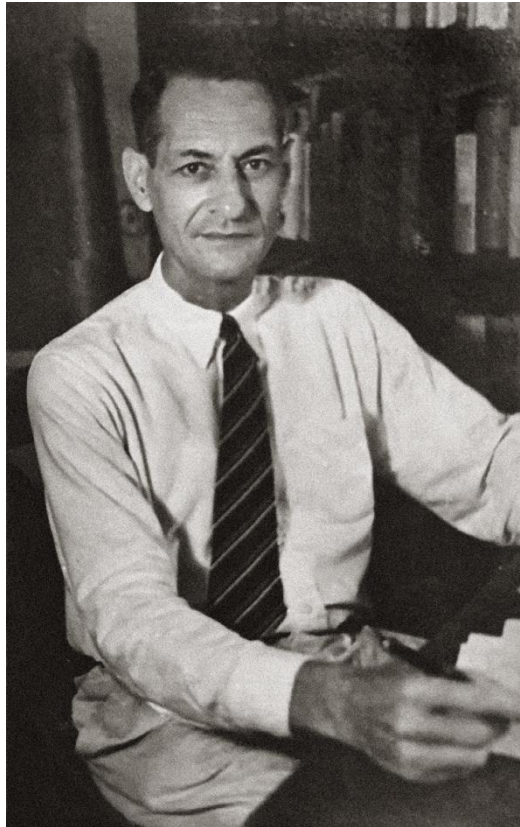


FIGURE 6.16.
Simon Admiraal, March 1947.

Collection of Simon Admiraal Family
Repro by Aminudin TH Siregar

Simon Admiraal was a key person behind the foundation of the academy (Fig.6.16). He proposed to the Dutch authority in Jakarta to meet the need for drawing teachers for secondary schools in Indonesia, which did not yet exist at that time. In June 1947, he was appointed to be a director of the school.¹³⁶ When the academy was officially opened on 20 October 1947

¹³⁵ Claire Holt, 1967, p. 234.

¹³⁶ S. Soemardja, "Sedjarah Pendek Balai Pendidikan Universiteir Guru Seni Rupa dan Pembukaan sampai Sekarang", 1 May 1953, paper, unpublished, p. 1., Special Collections - Leiden University Libraries, Or. 20.2000 R.

in Bandung, he was reported as giving a welcoming speech.¹³⁷ Admiraal served as program leader (1947-1949) and taught art history from classical to modern times. In 1951, his position as chairman was briefly replaced by Jack Zeylemaker, followed by Sjafé'i Soemardja until 1961.¹³⁸

Simon Admiraal has inherited a model of higher education in modern fine arts and design in Indonesia. This campus has produced several leading contemporary artists, such as Ahmad Sadali, Srihadi Soedarsono, A. D. Pirous, and the famous critic Sanento Yuliman. As I will discuss in Chapter 7, since the mid-1950s, because of Trisno Sumardjo's review in a magazine, this campus was labeled a "Western laboratory."

Simon Admiraal was born in Jakarta to an Indonesian mother and a Dutch father. In 1924, he took a course at the Academy of Arts in The Hague. Upon completion, he returned to Batavia and worked as a magazine illustrator, designing advertisements and posters. In the 1930s, Admiraal published a book on technical drawing for school reference. He is a multi-talented figure. Apart from being skilled in drawing, Admiraal is also actively reviewing exhibitions at the *Bataviaasche Kunstkring*. During the revolution, his writings appeared in the Dutch language magazine *Uitzicht*. As discussed in Chapter 7, his writings reflect his enthusiasm for promoting the strength of modern Indonesian artists such as Sudjojono and Emiria Sunassa.

With a proposal entitled *Ontwerpplan Kunstschool Indonesië - Bandoeng* (Design plan Art School Indonesia - Bandung), Admiraal formulated his art education concept (Fig.6.17). Graduates will have formal authority to teach drawing at high school level and have the opportunity to evolve into independent artists.¹³⁹ Students who participate in this program will be equipped with drawing, painting, sculpting, and designing. In addition, knowledge of the history of art, culture, and civilization is taught, including classical Indonesia, Islam, Europe, and Asia.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ "Opleiding Tekenleraren - Verbonden aan Faculteit van Exacte Wetenschap," *Algemeen Indisch dagblad*, 21 oktober 1947, p. 2 and "Academische Leergang Tekenleraren," *De locomotief: Samarangsche handels- en advertentie-blad*, 22 oktober 1947, front cover. Another version about the date is 1 August 1947. See Wiyoso Yudoseputro, et.al., *Pendidikan Tinggi Seni Rupa di Indonesia*, (Bandung: Jurusan Seni Rupa-ITB, 1983), p. 16.

¹³⁸ Wiyoso Yudoseputro, et.al., 1983, pp. 15-18.

¹³⁹ For more about Simon Admiraal's proposal, see Simon Admiraal, *Onwerpplan Kunstschool Indonesië-Bandoeng*, paper, unpublished, not dated, Special Collections - Leiden University Libraries, Or. 20.2000 Q.

¹⁴⁰ See Balai Perguruan Tinggi R.I.S. *Fakulteit Pengetahuan Teknik di Bandung - Programma untuk tahun pelajaran 1950-1951*, book's program, 1950, pp. 83 - 88 dan Balai Perguruan Tinggi R.I. *Fakulteit Pengetahuan Teknik di Bandung - Programma untuk Tahun Peladjaran 1951-1952*, book's

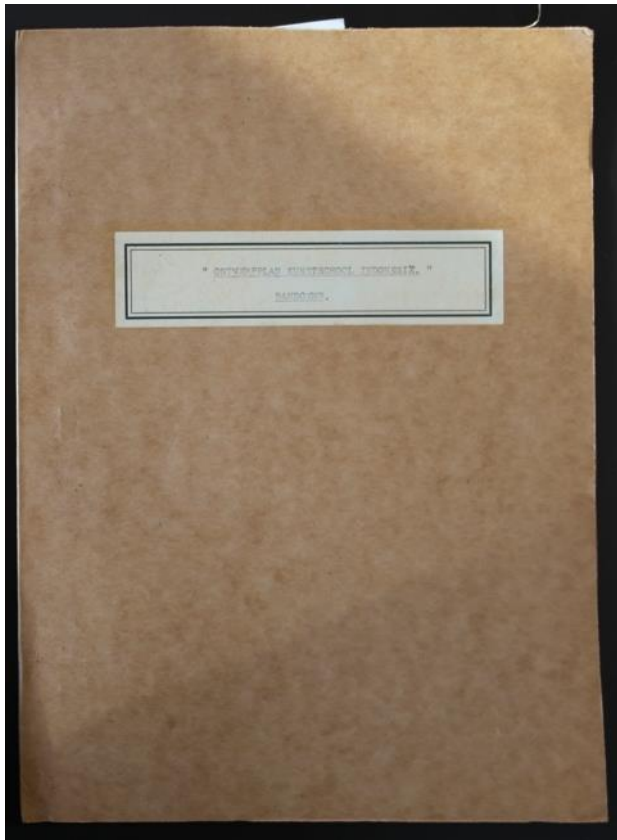


FIGURE 6.17.
School proposal by Simon Admiraal.

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

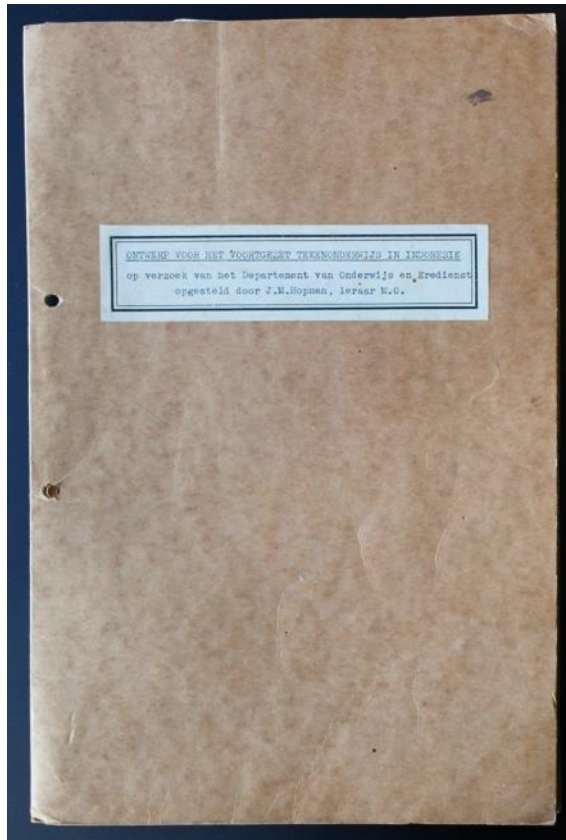


FIGURE 6.18.
School proposal by J. Hopman.

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

At first, Admiraal's idea was not immediately approved by the Dutch authorities in Jakarta.¹⁴¹ Instead, the government appointed J. Hopman, a high school teacher and art historian, to draft a counter concept. In the later process, Hopman's proposal with the title *Ontwerp voor het voortgezet tekenonderwijs in Indonesia – op verzoek van het Departement van Onderwijs en Eredienst* (Design for secondary art education in Indonesia – at the request of the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs)¹⁴² was considered too conventional (Fig.6.18). The proposal generally refers to art education in the Netherlands. The authorities finally acknowledged that Admiraal's idea was more contextual to Indonesia's needs.¹⁴³

program, 1951, pp. 77-85. See also *Universiteit v. Indonesie Universitaire Leergang v. Tekenleraren 1949-1950*, booklet, 1949. These manuals contain a list of lessons and the names of each teacher.

¹⁴¹ Edie Kartasubarna, "Pameran Prof. Edie Kartasubarna," 1980, exhibition brochure.

¹⁴² For more about J. Hopman's proposal, see J. Hopman, *Ontwerp voor het voortgezet tekenonderwijs in Indonesië – op verzoek van het Departement van Onderwijs en Eredienst*, paper, unpublished, undated, Special Collections - Leiden University Libraries, Or. 20.2000 Q.

¹⁴³ Edie Kartasubarna, 1980.

Helena Spanjaard noted that Admiraal was asked by the Dutch authorities to design a concept for art education.¹⁴⁴ However, Sjafel'i Soemardja has another version. According to him, the person assigned to create the program was J. M. Hopman. It is stated that in 1946 talks had taken place between E. A. Kreiken – an official from the Ministry of Education and Religion in Jakarta – and Hopman. Meanwhile, Admiraal also offered his concept. Kreiken suggested Hopman and Admiraal work together to combine their ideas. However, Hopman rejected Kreiken's idea.¹⁴⁵ The Dutch authority then assigned Simon Admiraal to prepare the foundation of the art education while at the same time listing names of candidates who would teach.

Impact of Aggression: The Great Loss and Back to Jakarta

The severe impact of the second Dutch military aggression is not discussed in standard narratives, even though this event scattered the artists' lives. This section will outline the significance of these impacts, especially the return of several artists to Jakarta and the loss of works of art and archives that the artists had created. Detailed records of the archives, primarily paintings, drawings, and sketches lost or destroyed due to the Dutch military aggression, are limited and obscure. There are no studies that measure the value of the losses suffered by Indonesian artists. I reconstructed the following narrative based on historical sources as written in newspapers, magazines, and memoirs.

The Great Loss

In her memoir, Mia Bustam recounts the experiences of her husband, Sudjojono. A few days before the Dutch invaded Yogyakarta, Sudjojono came to the city to prepare his solo exhibition retrospectively. He planned to present dozens of works that he had produced since the PERSAGI era. While in Yogyakarta, news spread that the Dutch would bombard the city. Sudjojono decided to return to his home in the village of Bogem – located on

¹⁴⁴ See Helena Spanjaard, 1998, p.159.

¹⁴⁵ See S. Soemardja, 1953, p. 1. Soemardja's version corresponds to the subtitle of Hopman's proposal, which is written: *op verzoek van het Departement van Onderwijs en Eredients* (at the request of the Department of Education and Religious Affairs).

the outskirts of the city. Arriving home in a hurry, he rolled his paintings into tubes and buried them in the ground. He left some of his sculpture works in the yard of the house. After that, Sudjojono and his family packed up. They fled deep into the hinterland to avoid raids by Dutch soldiers who had already started pursuing Republican guerrillas. Together with other refugees, they then arrived at the remote Kragan Village. Sudjojono and the other refugee families decided to stay there for a while.¹⁴⁶

Gradually the inhabitants of Kragan Village were enlivened by the arrival of groups of guerrillas and student soldiers. Sudjojono decided to join them and advance to the battlefield. The unfortunate incident occurred when the Dutch army went on a rampage by throwing mortars into the village area and almost surrounded it. Amid the chaos, Sudjojono's father, also on the battlefield, was shot dead by the Dutch army. Because he had to save himself, Sudjojono was forced to leave his father's body in the middle of the rice fields.

Misfortune continued to befall him. After the aggression subsided, Sudjojono went back to his house in Bogem, used as a post for the Dutch army. He was devastated when he found his paintings charred. Fragments of canvas were scattered everywhere. Not only that, his stone sculptures in the yard of the house had been destroyed as targets for shooting practice. His paintings from the pre-war period to the early days of the revolution had now been destroyed by fire.¹⁴⁷ Sudjojono recalled that moment of loss that shook him mentally: "Approximately 25 paintings that were ready to be exhibited were burnt and torn apart with the bayonets of the soldiers of General Spoor. The mangled paintings were found in the burnt waste."¹⁴⁸

The aggression paralyzed SIM Yogyakarta's headquarters, which Dullah had defended although it could not last long. Feeling the circumstances were becoming more acute, Dullah was forced to evacuate his family to the safer south of Yogyakarta. Dullah himself then returned to the city. He began to organize some young painters who were also his students to document situations of aggression through small-format paintings. With

¹⁴⁶ According to Mia Bustam, Sudjojono has prepared 45 works for the exhibition. See Mia Bustam, 2013, pp. 109 - 113.

¹⁴⁷ Mia Bustam, 2013, pp. 115-123. See also Tashadi, *Tokoh Seni, Cendekiawan, dan Kebudayaan*, (Yogyakarta: Balai Penelitian Sejarah dan Budaya Yogyakarta, 1919-1980), p. 36, Trisno Sumardjo, "Realisme Sudjojono", *Mimbar Indonesia*, 20 May 1950 and S. Sudjojono, "Sudjojono Tentang Sudjojono", *Mimbar Indonesia*, 19 August 1950.

¹⁴⁸ S. Sudjojono, "Seni Lukis di Indonesia" in *Budaja Djaja*, No. 28.TH.III, September 1970, p.557. According to Mia Bustam, Sudjojono has prepared 45 works for the exhibition, paintings, and sculptures. See Bustam, 2013, pp. 109 - 113.

this measure, Dullah hoped that apart from being easy to do, it would not catch the attention of the Dutch soldiers.



Fig.6.19.
Mohamad Toha's watercolor paintings, 1949.

Collection of Rijksmuseum Amsterdam
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

The young painters are Mohammad Toha (11 years old), Muh. Affandi (12 years old), F.X. Soetopo (15 years), Sri Suwarno (14 years), and Sarjito (14 years old). Employing various tactics, they went around the city of Yogyakarta. While carrying a small box that also held his painting equipment, Toha disguised himself by pretending to sell cigarettes. He traveled around depicting events at close range. Toha's small paintings document bombings, arrests, searches, looting, displacement, and more (Fig.6.19). Sarjito's fate was unlucky. On one particular occasion, the Dutch army managed to catch him. He was also sent to a juvenile prison in Tangerang, near Jakarta.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ This book, which contains the stories of Dullah's students describing the situation of the Dutch military aggression, has been published bilingually. Reproductions of their paintings are also featured in the book. In addition, some of Mohammad Toha's works are now in the collection of the



FIGURE 6.20.
Some of PTP's posters were created during the Revolution.
The Dutch army likely seized these during the Second Military
Aggression.

Collection of Nationaal Archief Den Haag.
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

Some artists left the SIM studio when the aggression took place. Instead, they took up arms and went to the mountains with the guerrilla troops. Meanwhile, the Dutch soldiers who carried out search operations arrested other painters, such as Rusli, Sudibio, Abdulsalam, and Rameli, who remained in the studio. As a result, the situation in the studio became

Rijksmuseum Amsterdam. For further reading see Dullah, *Karya dalam Peperangan dan Revolusi/Paintings in War and Revolution*, (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 1983).

uncertain. Following this incident, Dullah recorded approximately 70 paintings by painters stored in the SIM studio that then disappeared.¹⁵⁰ The paintings were initially intended to be donated as a collection of the "Museum Paintings of Struggle," which was planned to be established in Yogyakarta supported by Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX.¹⁵¹ However, Dullah assumed that painters outside of SIM members also lost a large number of their works.¹⁵²

In May 1949, *Merdeka* magazine also reported on paintings, sketches, and drawings that were lost during the aggression. Later, about one or two of the missing paintings were found but in a badly torn condition. According to *Merdeka*, the artists who suffered invaluable losses included Dullah, Hendra Gunawan, Surono, Sudjojono, Sudjana Kerton, and Rusli.¹⁵³ In his brief autobiography published in *Konfrontasi* magazine, Sudjana Kerton reveals that his paintings were lost due to aggression, but he did not provide any details about the loss.¹⁵⁴

The scale of the loss of valuable collections not only affects artists in Yogyakarta. The aggression by the Dutch soldiers also included an attack on the city of Solo. When that happened, as was the case with SIM Yogyakarta, SIM Solo artists led a chaotic life. As a result, SIM Solo had to disband because many of its members decided to go into battle. Only a few documents, books, and paintings have been salvaged from this branch. Countless works of art were lost or destroyed. Sudjojono wrote: "Books, paintings, and everything important and that could be carried away were evacuated to Suromo's house. That's where he and Sundoro and Trisno Sumardjo stayed and kept the paintings and other things from falling apart. They live with stress and suffering."¹⁵⁵

It should be noted that the loss of essential files is not limited to the SIM alone. The PTPI has also experienced significant losses of historical value. According to Djajengasmara, during the attack on Yogyakarta, the Dutch army randomly searched the PTPI office. They took away so many

¹⁵⁰ Sudarmadji, 1988, pp. 23-25.

¹⁵¹ Dullah, 1989, p. 11.

¹⁵² Dullah, 1989, p. 15.

¹⁵³ "Pelukis2 Jogja Ta' Tentu Nasibnja" in *Madjallah Merdeka*, 21 May 1949, pp. 9-10.

¹⁵⁴ S. Kerton, "Riwayat Hidup" in *Konfrontasi*, No.20., september-oktober, 1957, p.5. See also Astri Wright, "Sudjana Kerton: The Aesthetics of Revolution and the Birth of a Modern Artist" in Astri Wright, M. Dwi Marianto, and Hilda Soemantri, *The Revolution & Evolution of Sudjana Kerton*, (Bandung: Sanggar Luhur, 1999), p. 41.

¹⁵⁵ S. Sudjojono, 1954, p. 19.

vital documents that they had to be transported in three trucks (Fig.6.20). Furthermore, Dutch army opened fire on "the lockers and offices of the PTPI." They even threatened Djajengasmara and other exponents with death if they dared to fight back. Furthermore, after seizing the archives, the Dutch detained several PTPI members.¹⁵⁶

Back to Jakarta and The Role of Taman Siswa

Trisno Sumardjo, Zaini, and Oesman Effendi fled to Jakarta with the republican troops. These painters wanted to leave the uncertainty and insecurity of Yogyakarta.¹⁵⁷ Painter Nasjah Djamin remembered that those who moved to Jakarta besides himself included Affandi, Basuki Resobowo, Nashar, Zaini, and Soedarso.¹⁵⁸ On the other hand, Nashar wrote how, together with Sjahri, A. Wakidjan, and Nasjah Djamin, he joined the national army. Before reaching Jakarta, they traveled a long way, sometimes interspersed with making propaganda posters in several places they visited.¹⁵⁹

Apart from seeking safety due to the uncertain conditions in Yogyakarta, the reason for Affandi's evacuation to Jakarta was in preparation for his departure to Visva-Bharati University in Shantiniketan, India, to continue his studies.¹⁶⁰ Affandi's journey from Yogyakarta to Jakarta reportedly did not go smoothly. In one of the transit cities, he was suspected and imprisoned by the Dutch army for one month.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Djajengasmara, *Tjataan Riwayat Perdjoengan P.T.P.I Mulai Tanggal 20 oktober 1945, 1952*.

¹⁵⁷ Mia Bustam, 2013, p. 114. I argue that Trisno Sumardjo had not left Yogyakarta (or Solo) until July 1950. This fact can be seen in his correspondence with H.B. Jassin between 1949-1950. In their correspondence throughout 1949, Sumardjo still had his address in Solo. For further reading, see Aminudin TH Siregar, Amir Sidharta & Harm Stevens, "Artist and The Indonesian Revolution" in Harm Stevens, (et.al), *Revolusi! Indonesia Independent*, (Amsterdam-Antwerp: Atlas Contact, 2022), pp.201-223.

¹⁵⁸ Nasjah Djamin, *Affandi Pelukis* (Bandung: Aqua Press, 1979), pp. 70-71. See also Nasjah Djamin and Sides Sudyarto, *The World of Sudarso*, (Jakarta: Hexart Publishing, 2005), p. 144.

¹⁵⁹ Nashar, 2002, pp. 43-54. See also Suhatno, 1985, p. 74.

¹⁶⁰ Affandi went to India in 1951 and continued to journey to Europe, where he is reported to have achieved brilliant results. Later he returned to Indonesia in August 1954 and a year later held a solo exhibition in Jakarta. For the story of Affandi's return and a review of his exhibition, see Trisno Sumardjo, "Affandi" in Ajip Rosidi, et al., 1978 and the same article in *Seni*, No. 10. Th.1., October 1955, pp. 457-461. For stories about Affandi's achievements in India and Europe, see the writings of Bambang Budjono and Helena Spanjaard in Sardjana Sumichan (ed.), *Affandi Volume III*, (Jakarta-Singapore: Bina Lestari Budaya & Singapore Art Museum, 2007).

¹⁶¹ Suhatno, 1985, p. 72.

Steleng Seni Lukis

Dalam perajaan Taman Siswa Djakarta
genap 20 tahun. Gabungan Pelukis Indo-
nesia dan Sin Ming Hui (bag. seni lukis)

TAMAN SISWA

Djl. Garuda 25

DJAKARTA



DARI 11 SEPTEMBER
SAMPAI 18 SEPTEMBER
1949

DJAM

9 pagi — 1 siang

4 sore — 6 sore

FIGURE 6.21.
Exhibition brochure *Steleng Seni Lukis*.

Collection of H.B. Jassin's Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

Not long after arriving in Jakarta, Affandi formed an artist group called *Gabungan Pelukis Indonesia-GPI* (The Indonesian Painters Association)¹⁶² which was facilitated simply in the Taman Siswa school complex, Jalan Garuda Jakarta. An extraordinary contribution came from one of the school's teachers, who was progressive even though his name was never mentioned in the historiography of modern Indonesian art. He was Mohammad Said Reksohadiprodjo.¹⁶³ Known as a brilliant nationalist and educator, when many moved to Yogyakarta in early 1946, Said Reksohadiprodjo insisted on maintaining the Taman Siswa Jalan Garuda 25 school complex. This Taman Siswa was known as a "republican school" despite its location within the territory of the Dutch government. Taman Siswa was therefore often the object of intimidation and pressure from the Dutch army. Not surprisingly, to many people, the Dutch writer Dolf Verspoor always introduced the Taman Siswa school complex as "the last Republican fortress in Jakarta."¹⁶⁴

The head of GPI was a Taman Siswa teacher, namely Sutiksna. His representative was Handrio, a painter who would later become prominent with his abstract geometric style. Painters who came from Yogyakarta joined the GPI.¹⁶⁵ The GPI studio soon became a "melting pot" for Jakarta's artists. Poet Sitor Situmorang recalls the charm of the studio formed by Affandi as a "republican spiritual hub, a lighthouse of the spirit of 1945's revolution."¹⁶⁶ Indeed, not only painters, writers, such as Chairil Anwar, Rivai Apin, H.B. Jassin, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, Achdiat K. Mihadja, and including Sitor Situmorang himself, often came to the studio to discuss various topics about art and culture.¹⁶⁷

Situmorang admitted that it was in the studio that he met Affandi for the first time and learned the world of art. The experience impressed him so much that he built awareness that "Indonesian art is part of the search and

¹⁶² Trisno Sumardjo, "Affandi" in Ajip Rosidi, et.al., 1978, p. 102.

¹⁶³ For further reading see Moekhardi, *Mohammad Said Reksohadiprodjo: Hasil Karya dan Pengabdianya*, (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Direktorat Sejarah dan Nilai Tradisional Proyek Inventarisasi dan Dokumentasi Sejarah Nasional, 1982/1983) and Yayasan Idayu (ed.), *Mohammad Said Reksohadiprodjo Di Mata Sahabatnya, Di Mata Pers, Tentang Ide-Idenya, Dalam Foto-Foto*, (Jakarta: Penerbit Idayu, 1979). For Taman Siswa activities during the revolution, see W. le Fèvre, *Taman Siswa*, (Djakarta-Surabaya: Penerbitan dan Balai Buku Indonesia, 1951). In this book, Muhammad Said's profile can be read from pages 58-70. See also Suhatno, 1985, p. 73.

¹⁶⁴ Moekhardi, 1982/1983, p. 26 and W. le Fèvre, 1951, p. 61.

¹⁶⁵ Nashar, 2002, pp. 76-77.

¹⁶⁶ Sitor Situmorang, "Bertemu dengan Affandi" in Ajip Rosidi, et al., 1978, p. 97.

¹⁶⁷ Nashar, 2002, pp. 60-61 and Nasjah Djamin dan Sides Sudyarto, 2005, 144.

communication medium with the Indonesian-ness, which is centered on the maturation of contemporary worldviews." As a result, he became increasingly aware of the emergence of a "new Indonesian culture, through modern art because of individuality."¹⁶⁸

The two exhibitions initiated by Taman Siswa are essential to address because historians have never discussed them. In September 1949, as many as 51¹⁶⁹ painters from GPI and a Chinese association, Sin Ming Hui,¹⁷⁰ held the exhibition titled *Steleng Seni Lukis 1949* (Painting Exhibition of 1949) to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Taman Siswa (Fig.6.21). The exhibition brochure informed that most of the painters were members of the GPI Jakarta and Sukabumi branches. Among the names of painters from Sin Ming Hui are Liu Mei Yung, Tan Niann Ba, and The Fo Hin. This exhibition also displayed paintings by Sudjojono and Suromo representing SIM; Hendra Gunawan and Kusnadi represented the *Pelukis Rakyat* (People's Painter), both of which were based in Yogyakarta. In addition, of course, other famous painters such as Affandi, Henk Ngantung, Salim, G.A. Sukirno, Wahdi, and several others participated.¹⁷¹ According to Said Reksohadiprodjo, the exhibition's significance is that it shows the latest developments in modern Indonesian art.¹⁷²

Reksohadiprodjo was not the only person who regarded the show as a breakthrough in marking the progress of Indonesian modern art. Painter and critic Basoeki Resobowo, through his reflection in *Mimbar Indonesia* magazine, also emphasized that the *Steleng Seni Lukis 1949* succeeded in proposing novel artistic values. According to him, the exhibition confirms that "Indonesia mulai melukis" (Indonesia started to paint). The paintings created by the artists have met the requirements of "becoming art" because

¹⁶⁸ Sitor Situmorang in Ajip Rosidi, et al., 1978, pp. 96-97.

¹⁶⁹ According to *Merdeka* magazine, the number of works on display was 90 out of 248 that the exhibition committee received. See "Steleng Besar Seni Lukis Oleh Gabungan Pelukis Indonesia", *Madjallah Merdeka*, 3 September 1949, p. 16.

¹⁷⁰ Sin Ming Hui formed in 1946 in Jakarta. This association managed painting course for Indonesia-Chinese's. See Dewan Redaksi, *Buku Peringatan Sin Ming Hui Djakarta 1946-1951*, (Jakarta: Badan Pengurus Sin Ming Hui Jakarta, 1951).

¹⁷¹ See brochure *Steleng Seni Lukis 1949 – 20 Tahun Taman Siswa*, Gabungan Pelukis Indonesia dan Sin Ming Hui (Bagian Seni Lukis), 11 – 18 September 1949, Taman Siswa Jalan Garuda 25 Jakarta.

¹⁷² Mohammad Said Reksohadiprodjo, "Merdeka!" in brochure *Steleng Seni Lukis 1949 – 20 Tahun Taman Siswa*, 1949. See also Pedoman, 5 July 1949, "Schilderijen in de Taman Siswa", *Het dagblad: uitgave van de Nederlandsche Dagbladpers te Batavia*, 14 September 1949, and *De locomotief: Samarangsch handels-en advertentie-blad*, 13 September 1949. It is also reported that this exhibition provides a particular space to display a collection of writings by the poet Chairil Anwar - who died in April 1949 - as a tribute to his services for developing new Indonesian literature.

they have "used their sense and artistic sensibility" to substantiate reality to a higher level.¹⁷³ Resobowo also stressed that Indonesian painters managed to break away from the restrictions of "social, religion, morality, science, and state affairs," and that these acts offered modern values.¹⁷⁴

Resobowo's observations are intertwined with those of Oesman Effendi. They exchanged letters published as articles in the cultural magazine *Zenith* in 1951. I think the main subject of their lengthy, difficult-to-understand letters reflects their belief in the modernity of Indonesian art.

Resobowo's first letter was written on 19 October 1949 and opened with the following confession: "For me, at this time it can be said that Indonesia has been painted again and we can name the new Indonesian painting. And by this, of course, I also mean that there is already an Indonesian style." Effendi agreed with Resobowo's declaration. Discussions about the influence of Western painting between both of them certainly cannot be avoided. In his letter, Effendi tried to convince Resobowo that Western influence would not be discreditable for a nation as long as the influence was then "purified with the authenticity of one's own soul." He concludes by writing a prediction: "The East-West difference is relative until at some point in time it becomes mere nonsense."¹⁷⁵ The correspondence between Basuki Resobowo and Oesman Effendi confirmed that the 1949 exhibition made a significant contribution.

It is important to emphasise that the 1949 exhibition continued a previous program. In October 1948, Taman Siswa presented a retrospective exhibition with the title *Lukisan dan Sastra: Dari Masa Lalu hingga Kini* (Paintings and Literature from the Past to the Present) that offered a historical timeline of paintings from Raden Saleh and Mas Pirngadie to the new generation, such as Handrio, Derachman, and Sutiksna, besides well-known names such as Affandi, Basuki Abdullah, Emiria Sunassa, and S. Sudjojono (Fig.6.22).¹⁷⁶

Furthermore, this exhibition left as a legacy a significant paper that set the periodization system of modern Indonesian art history for the first time. Writing for the exhibition catalog (Fig. 6.23), Zuber Usman divided the development of Indonesian art history into three periods: "Raden Saleh,"

¹⁷³ Basuki Resobowo, "Indonesia Sudah Melukis" in *Mimbar Indonesia*, 1 October 1949. See also the short version of the review in Basuki Resobowo, "Steleng Seni Lukis" in *Daya*, 1 October 1949.

¹⁷⁴ S.S.A., "Lepaskan Ikatan: Sekitar Steleng di Taman Siswa" in *Siasat*, 18 October 1949.

¹⁷⁵ See "Perkembangan Seni Lukis Indonesia Baru: Surat Menjurat antar Dua Orang Pelukis" in *Zenith*, 15 February 1951, pp. 65-87.

¹⁷⁶ "Tentoonstelling Indonesische schilderijen en letterkunde" in *De nieuwsgier*, 23 October 1948.

"The Generation After Raden Saleh," and "The New Generation." Usman emphasized that Raden Saleh is only concerned with himself and has not created national unity. The generation after Raden Saleh bloomed in nationalism, which was continued by Affandi and Sudjojono's generation, who wanted to find and achieve an Indonesian style.¹⁷⁷



FIGURE 6.22.
Affandi drew the exhibition flyer of Taman Siswa 1949.

Collection of HB Jassin's Library Jakarta
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

Despite the success and contribution of the two Taman Siswa exhibitions, Muhammad Balfas strongly criticized them. He declared that the two exhibitions had no character because they needed to provide an overview of the struggle of Indonesian painting.¹⁷⁸ According to him, artists only

¹⁷⁷ See the catalog of *Pameran Lukisan-lukisan dan Sastra dari Dulu sampai Sekarang*, 17 – 24 October 1948, Taman Siswa Jalan Garuda 25, Jakarta. This paper was also published in the magazine. See Zuber Usman dan Affandi, "Sedikit Pembitjaraan tentang Seni Lukis Indonesia" in *Mimbar Indonesia*, 16 October 1948, pp. 17 and 21.

¹⁷⁸ Balfas also directed his criticism to another exhibition held in August 1948 by the *Gelanggang* group at the Des Indes Hotel, Jakarta. The exhibition with the theme of *Seni Lukis Indonesia Sekarang*

consider exhibitions as a means to hang their paintings on the walls. Balfas argued that the works showcased in the exhibition were not in line with the struggle for Indonesian painting, as there was a lack of clarity on aspects such as personality and style. For him, the exhibition portrayed a blurry picture of Indonesian art. Balfas also expressed dissatisfaction with Sin Ming Hui's painters for lacking a soulful vibe and offering nothing new. Furthermore, he also stated that a group exhibition cannot be used to assess the newness of Indonesian painting.¹⁷⁹



FIGURE 6.23.
Exhibition catalog Taman Siswa 1948.

Collection of Leiden University Library
Photo by Aminudin TH Siregar

(Indonesian Painting Now) lasted for one week. Unfortunately, I have not found detailed information about this show. However, see the advertisement in *Keng Po*, 5 August 1948.

¹⁷⁹ M. Balfas, "Steleng Seni Lukis di Taman Siswa: Steleng Tidak Berwatak" in *Indonesia*, No.9. Th.I, October, 1949, pp. 515-517.

For Balfas – and other nationalist critics – expressing Indonesian characteristics or style in paintings was a significant matter debated during the Revolution. At the same time as determining an artist's personality, style, and adherence to a particular artistic movement, this 'Indonesian-ness' value is also shaped by the artists themselves. It is a way to inspire and challenge artists to stay loyal to their cultural identity and show national pride in their work, thereby influencing the concept of 'Indonesian-ness. '

Undoubtedly, the concept of 'Indonesian-ness' can be problematic, potentially leading to oversimplification and the perpetuation of stereotypes. Artists and critics often generalize a nation's personality and cultural traits when analyzing paintings, hindering a deeper understanding and appreciation of diverse artistic expressions. Nonetheless, it is essential to note that different ideologies have different criteria for what should be considered 'Indonesian-ness' in painting. For instance, leftist artists advocated for paintings that accurately depicted the reality of the people, while others rejected this view, championing the freedom of artists to express themselves.

Conclusion

The period from 1945 to 1950 was not just a phase but a crucial epoch in shaping the identity of modern art in Indonesia. Following the preceding Japanese occupation, this era was a significant attempt to document the history of Indonesian art for the first time. This chapter has unearthed many essential events, connections, and contexts that needed to be addressed or given attention in canonical art history, underscoring the importance of re-examining this period for further research.

This chapter has briefly outlined the complex interaction between artists, writers, and intellectuals and their participation in revolution, a topic not typically addressed in a canon narrative. In addition to advancing the narrative of Indonesian art historiography, this chapter has addressed archives, such as specific types of documents, from extensive research conducted across various library collections.

This chapter also highlights the incredible resilience of Indonesian artists during the revolutionary period, which enabled them to establish themselves as prominent figures and strive for international recognition. This represented a significant shift from their prior position of inferiority under Dutch colonialism and Japanese occupation. The chapter also discusses

the artists' mobility as they moved from one city to another. As a result, between 1945 and 1950, a comprehensive national representation of contemporary art emerged, including the Jakarta, Bandung, and Yogyakarta schools, signifying the artists' journey and impact on the art scene.

The revolutionary period was also characterized by communal action, with artists forming collectives to deliberate and debate the artistic values of Indonesian identity—or, as referred to above, "Indonesian-ness." I will delve into this topic further in Chapter Seven.