

During Sukarno's era, the direction of Balinese art has a different agenda, not in the direction of art history. "That agenda was to present a positive image of Indonesia as a new nation on the international stage ... For Sukarno, the *Mooi Indië* view was easier to integrate into the national story than complicated and challenging modernist works. It was certainly easier to accommodate *Mooi Indië* art into the attempts to restore tourism to Bali. Curiously the alignment of newer Balinese art with national culture has created a problem in terminology. What was once 'modern' art of Bali is now called 'traditional'.<sup>4</sup> What once was the triumph of Balinese Modern Art is now becoming a tourist attraction. But it did successfully build a tourism industry in Bali and it became an icon for the nation.

"Following on the examples of Affandi and Agus Djaja, aspiring artists from all over the archipelago made Bali a place of pilgrimage. However this connection encouraged Balinese who wanted to be modern Indonesian artists to go to the centers on Java from which these aspiring artists came, particularly to study in Bandung and Yogyakarta."<sup>5</sup> Amongst the first generation of artists who studied in Java was a respected leading Balinese artist, Nyoman Tusan, who went to study art in Bandung, and encouraged the younger generation of Balinese artists to follow his path. Amongst the second generation of

artists who studied outside Bali were I Made Wianta, Nyoman Gunarsa, I Wayan Sika, Pande Gede Supada, and I Nyoman Arsana. They were the pioneers of Sanggar Dewata Indonesia. As recorded by Richard Horstman, "These artists were young and dynamic and they loved to experiment with new techniques and aesthetic concepts. This was the prerequisite for artists who were invited to join this avant-garde collective. Theirs was a vision of freedom of expression in art."<sup>6</sup>

A particularly important part of Sanggar Dewata Indonesia (SDI) has been its reference to traditional Balinese aesthetics. Sometimes in the form of direct appropriation of *wayang* figures and Kamasan art and at other times, through the direct study and adaptation of traditional techniques and styles. In many works of these artists, we could see that they are no longer bound or influenced by the Bali Modernism, but I can sense that their spirits are still rooted in Bali. We witness this in the *Karangasem* series of paintings by Made Wianta, which depicts flora and fauna in very intricate and fine ornamentations, probably inspired by Balinese *raja*h (the drawing of symbols or Balinese alphabets that is believed to possess spiritual powers). If we look closely at Wianta's ornamentations, we are unable to find any typical Balinese ornaments, but we could feel the sense of Bali in his paintings. The

same kind of feeling can also be found in his other painting entitled *Dream Island*. Through Wianta's composition of colors and dots, we could sense the spirit of Bali.

Similar sensibilities are also evident in the works of I Made Djirna presented in this exhibition, entitled *Men and Beasts*, *Primitive Images*, and *Ceremony in Red*. In all of these works, Djirna overcrowded his canvases with interlocking images of small figures and animals, although it does reminds me of Jean Dubuffet's works, but in



Made Wianta  
*Jade Mosaic*  
2005  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
90 x 120 cm  
(unframed)  
111.5 x 140.5 x 2.5 cm  
(framed)

Djirna's works we could sense the primitive spirit and the *taksu* of Bali (a unique Balinese concept of charisma, spiritual power, and artistic inspiration needed to capture the eyes, minds, and hearts of the audience).

Looking at the works of both Made Wianta and I Made Djirna, they might

be different in their artistic approaches as well as the narratives, but they do have one thing in common that really caught my attention. It is the fact that both artists do not show any sense of perspective in their paintings. The composition of their paintings are flat which is similar to Balinese ornaments or the traditional Kamasan paintings.

Budi Agung Kuswara, also a member of Sanggar Dewata Indonesia (SDI), is the youngest artist participating in this exhibition. He hailed from the same alma mater as Made Wianta

Cyanotype. Using images he found on the Internet, he composes them on his computer and transfers them onto a large film, which he uses to create his cyanotype print on canvas. Finally, he lays acrylic paint onto the canvas to colour parts of his cyanotype print. As part of the Hindu community, he believes that life is about now, not the past nor the future. But as human beings, we are unable to escape from our past memories. In his works presented in this exhibition entitled *Eastern Fortune* (*deep blue mirror series*), he has created a composition from an old photograph and images of various objects, where each object is able to trigger a certain memory in the minds of the audience. In a sense, he is an artist who does not dictate an artistic narration to the audience, but instead, wants them to give their own interpretations and meanings into the artworks.

Bali's society has a unique characteristic where daily lives are still deeply centered on their religious belief, the *Agama Tirtha* or 'the Religion of the Holy Water'. Balinese Hinduism incorporates interpretations of Chinese, Indian, and Javanese beliefs. Balinese truly believe that they are trusted by God *Sanghyang Widhi* to take care of the land. As a result, they are deeply religious and make great efforts to appease the gods through processions, offerings, ceremonies, and many other religious activities. Hence, many disciplines of art are still alive in the daily lives of the people as a part of their religious activities. On the other hand, Bali is also an international tourist paradise and 'party' destination, where hotels, resorts, villas, clubs, beach clubs, and



I Made Djirna  
*Men and Beasts*  
2019  
mixed media on canvas  
200 x 140 cm

many other tourist-related facilities are becoming the main economic heartbeat of Bali.

Bali is the place of contradictions between deep religious beliefs versus worldly pleasures, traditional versus international, and they go hand in hand in harmony. This unique contradiction in cultural and social characteristics has given a unique artistic soul to many Balinese contemporary artists, as evident in the works of the three artists showcased in this exhibition. To me, this is the "contemporaneity that roots back to its traditional soul".

- Hermanto Soerjanto

# Hermanto Soerjanto

(Curator)



HERMANTO SOERJANTO (b. 1970, Indonesia) went to Palin School of Arts & Design in Singapore and Akademi Teknik Desain Interior (ATDI) in Jakarta, Indonesia, before joining Cipta Citra advertising agency in 1994. Since then, he had built his career in the field of advertising and currently holds a position at Pantarei Communications as Chief Creative Officer. As an art collector, Hermanto Soerjanto is familiar with Indonesian artists, having spent much time conversing with them and visiting their studios. In 2008 he established GARIS Artspace, an art gallery in Jakarta showcasing works by contemporary Indonesian artists, where he organizes and curates the exhibitions on regular basis. To date, Hermanto Soerjanto has organized several exhibitions, most notably *Noodle Theory* by Angki Purbandono at GARIS Artspace (2010), *Ethnicity Now*, a group exhibition at Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta (2010), and *Unveiling Fundamentals in Contemporary Art Through Asia* at OHD Museum, Magelang, Indonesia (2015). Hermanto Soerjanto lives and works in Jakarta, Indonesia.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pg. 37-38.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Horstman, "Sanggar Dewata Indonesia", *Life as Art Asia*, [http://lifeasartasia.weebly.com/uploads/6/5/3/0/6530628/sanggar\\_dewata\\_indonesia\\_1.pdf](http://lifeasartasia.weebly.com/uploads/6/5/3/0/6530628/sanggar_dewata_indonesia_1.pdf), (accessed on January 08, 2020).

## Rooted in Bali

Budi Agung Kuswara, I Made Djirna, Made Wianta

Curated by Hermanto Soerjanto

10 January – 16 February 2020

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## MIZUMA GALLERY

Executive Director Sueo Mizuma established Mizuma Art Gallery in Tokyo in 1994. Since its opening in Gillman Barracks, Singapore in 2012, the gallery aims for the promotion of East Asian artists in the region as well as the introduction of Southeast Asian artists to the international art scene. From 2014 to 2019, the artist residency space "Rumah Kijang Mizuma" operated in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, providing a new platform for dialogue by supporting exchanges between East Asian and Southeast Asian artists. In 2018, a new gallery space, "Mizuma, Kips & Wada Art" opened in New York, USA, as a shared collaboration between Mizuma Gallery from Tokyo and Singapore, Kips Gallery from New York, and Wada Garou from Tokyo.

Mizuma Gallery features the works of Japanese artists including Aida Makoto, Aiko Miyanaga, Amano Yoshitaka, Ikeda Manabu, Tenmyouya Hisashi, and Yamaguchi Akira. Moreover, it showcases the works of renown East Asian artists such as Ai Weiwei, Du Kun, Jun Nguyen-Hatsushiba, Ken + Julia Yonetani, and Zhao Zhao. The gallery also features the creations of prominent and emerging artists from the region including Agan Harahap, Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Angki Purbandono, Entang Wiharso, Gilang Fradika, Heri Dono, indieguerillas, Made Wianta, Mark Justiniani, Nasirun, Robert Zhao Renhui, and Zen Teh. Mizuma Gallery participates annually in international art fairs including Art Basel Hong Kong and The Armory Show, New York.

## GILLMAN BARRACKS

Set in a former military barracks dating back to 1936 and surrounded by lush tropical greenery, the Gillman Barracks visual arts cluster was launched in September 2012. Jointly developed by government agencies, the Singapore Economic Development Board (EDB), the National Arts Council (NAC) and the JTC Corporation (JTC), Gillman Barracks' vision is to be Asia's destination for the presentation and discussion of international and Southeast Asian art. For more information, please visit [www.gillmanbarracks.com](http://www.gillmanbarracks.com)

## MIZUMA GALLERY

10 January – 16 February 2020

# ROOTED IN BALI

Budi Agung Kuswara  
I Made Djirna  
Made Wianta

curated by  
Hermanto Soerjanto

## Rooted in Bali

Back in the 1930s, Bali was one of Indonesia's most important places for modern art development. But looking at the Balinese art scene now, I think it has been dormant for too long. What I mean is that Bali is no longer acting as fertile soil for the growth of art and its artists. However, it does not mean that there are no prominent artists in Bali. In fact, one of the most important Indonesian contemporary artists, Nyoman Masriadi, is a Balinese who lives and works in Yogyakarta, yet refuses to be labeled as a Balinese artist. Nyoman Masriadi is an example of the many artists who had envisioned themselves working on a global level in the rapidly changing contemporary art scene. They ventured out of Bali, since it is not possible to work as an artist within the confines of the 'Bali image' and to gain global recognition.

In his paper, *Balinese Art Versus Global Art*, presented at Bali World Culture Forum, June 2011, Adrian Vickers wrote that there are two main reasons why "Balinese art" is not global: "First, it became too closely subordinated to tourism between the 1950s and 1970s, and secondly, because of confusion about how to classify "modern" and "traditional" Balinese art."<sup>1</sup>

"In 1930s, art (in Bali) was truly modernist, in that it involved experimentation and searching for new styles and modes of art. It deserves recognition in art historical terms, but it has been problematic in narratives of the development of modern Indonesian art, in that it does not fit in with the teleology of modernism from Raden Saleh to Persagi to the Bandung and Yogyakarta Schools of painting."<sup>2</sup> According to Adrian Vickers, "The narrowing of Balinese art in the 1950s is a complex topic, and I have set out in more detail the factors that influenced this change. Chief amongst these factors was the influence of Rudolf Bonnet, who advised marketers of art (such as G. Koopman), directed commissions (as in the case of a big Dutch-American exhibition of 1948-49), assisted in the setting up of formal schools (in Ubud, Pliatan and Batuan), and played a major institutional role in the setting up of Museum Puri Lukisan (Bakker 1985). The new direction of art was much more in accord with Bonnet's taste, and his lack of interest in modernism in his own art. Bonnet's art belonged to what Sudjojono derisively called 'Mooi Indië' or 'Beautiful Indies' art, idyllic depictions of happy natives in rice fields, that was a part of colonial mentality of the western artists who lived in Bali in the 1930s (Holt 1967)."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Adrian Vickers, "Balinese Art Versus Global Art", *Jurnal Kajian Bali*, Vol. 01, No. 02 (Oct 2011): pg. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pg. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pg. 37.





# Made Wianta



MADE WIANTA (b. 1949, Bali, Indonesia) graduated from the Indonesia Institute of Arts (ISI), Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 1974. He is one of the most important figures in Balinese contemporary art and is one of the most prominent Indonesian abstract artists. Some of his exhibitions include *Beyond the Myths: Art Bali* at AB•BC Building, Bali Collection, Bali, Indonesia (2018); *Run For Manhattan* at Ciptadana Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia (2017); and *After Utopia: Revisiting the Ideal in Asian Contemporary Art* at Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (2015). Wianta was one of the artists at the Indonesian Pavilion of the Beijing International Art Biennale #7, National Art Museum of China, Beijing, China (2017). His works are in the collections of OHD Museum, Magelang, Indonesia; Museum der Kulturen, Basel, Switzerland; Rudana Art Museum, Ubud, Bali, Indonesia; Agung Rai Museum of Art, Ubud, Bali, Indonesia; National Gallery of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia; Neka Art Museum, Ubud, Bali, Indonesia; Darwin Art Museum, Darwin, Australia; and Museum Bali, Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia amongst others. Made Wianta lives and works in Bali, Indonesia.



Made Wianta, *The Soul of The Trees* (detail)

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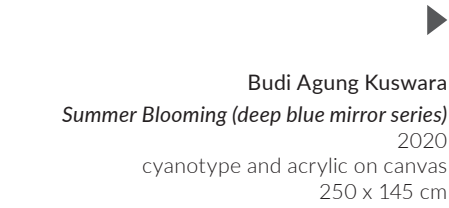
**Made Wianta**  
*The Soul of The Trees*  
1982  
Chinese ink on traditional canvas  
87 x 191 cm (unframed)  
93.5 x 198.5 x 6.1 cm (framed)

▶

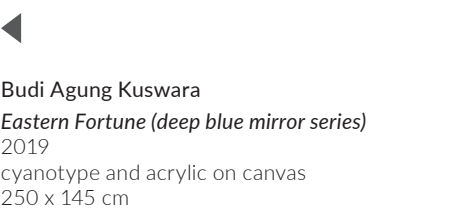
**I Made Djirna**  
*Ceremony in Red*  
2019  
mixed media on canvas  
200 x 140 cm



Budi Agung Kuswara, *Summer Blooming* (deep blue mirror series) (detail)



Budi Agung Kuswara  
*Summer Blooming* (deep blue mirror series)  
2020  
cyanotype and acrylic on canvas  
250 x 145 cm



Budi Agung Kuswara  
*Eastern Fortune* (deep blue mirror series)  
2019  
cyanotype and acrylic on canvas  
250 x 145 cm

## Budi Agung Kuswara



BUDI AGUNG KUSWARA (b. 1982, Bali, Indonesia) graduated with a Bachelor in Fine Arts from the Indonesia Institute of Arts (ISI), Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 2009. His major exhibitions include *Arus Berlabuh Kita* at the Asian Civilization Museum, Singapore (2018); *Love Me in My Batik* at ILHAM Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2016); *Floating Desires* at TAKSU Gallery, Singapore (solo, 2012); *The Wax on Our Fingers*, a collaboration with Singaporean artist Samantha Tio (Mintio), at the Indonesian Contemporary Arts Network, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2012); and *i.self* at Komaneka Fine Art Gallery, Bali, Indonesia (solo, 2009). He has also undertaken residencies at Bamboo Curtain Studio, Taipei, Taiwan (2016), Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, Fukuoka, Japan (2012), and TAKSU Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2012). Budi Agung Kuswara lives and works in Bali, Indonesia, where he co-founded *Ketemu Project Space*, a visual collective and social enterprise hybrid with focus on social engagement.

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**I Made Djirna**  
*Primitive Images*  
2019  
mixed media on canvas  
200 x 140 cm

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**I Made Djirna**  
*Primitive Images* (detail)



## I Made Djirna



I MADE DJIRNA (b. 1957, Bali, Indonesia) is a renowned artist who graduated from the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 1985. Djirna grew up in a village in Ubud, Bali, surrounded by Balinese stories of spirits, dance, and shadow puppetry. The people of Ubud treated traditions, customs, and religion with great significance, as it was believed that it could help achieve peace and well being – a principal of life rooted deep down in Djirna's heart. Through his works, Djirna explores the social and political issues of Indonesia and human relationships. Exploring the use of different materials, techniques and styles, he masterfully translates these thoughts and emotions into his paintings and installations. His solo exhibitions includes *The Logic of Ritual* at Sangkring Art Space, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2013); *Seascapes* at Gajah Gallery, Singapore (2007); and held his first solo exhibition at the Northern Territory Museum of Art and Sciences, Darwin, Australia (1989). His past exhibitions also extend widely across Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, Canada and the United States. I Made Djirna lives and works in Bali, Indonesia.