

The background of the entire page is an abstract artwork by Hedi Soetardja. It features a warm, yellowish-orange textured surface. In the top left corner, there is a thick, expressive white brushstroke. In the bottom right, there are several bold, black, gestural lines and scribbles. Other smaller black marks and strokes are scattered across the lower half of the image.

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Solo Exhibition of Hedi Soetardja

Derau Sunyi Hedi Soetardja

Hedi Soetardja's Quiet Noise A Curatorial Introduction

In February, Hedi Soetardja began staying at Wot Batu's basement room to paint. Wot Batu is Sunaryo's rock garden, a stone's throw away from Selasar Sunaryo Art Space (SSAS) where Hedi, along with other selected artists from Jelegong, participated a residency program two years ago. The residency had allowed Hedi to discover or encounter a new artistic practice, namely abstract painting, and it helped to soothe Hedi's anxieties regarding his artistic/creative practices back in Jelegong¹. Hedi wanted to be able to create works as an independent entity, without having to be immersed inside a vortex otherwise known as 'commissioned paintings', something of a common, even institutionalized practice, in Jelegong these past few years; he also wanted to try to immerse himself in Bandung's contemporary art scene.

The 2-month long residency at SSAS provided Hedi with ample space to develop his new artistry, free from the routines of commission-work. Sunaryo (artist/owner of SSAS) especially guided and helped him to develop his ideas and train his artistic sensitivity. Within the context of his artistry/creative process, Hedi also worked to transform, and sometimes even discover, the frictions found between intuition and cognition as the basis for his creative concepts. Hedi's expressive brushstrokes were often limited by his own self-consciousness, which in turn led him to think and measure out every possibility there could be. Recognizing this matter, Hedi consciously tried to lessen these impulses, sometimes simply by lengthening his paintbrush handles, in order to achieve strokes that are more raw, random, and unexpected.

Hedi also found himself becoming more passionate in expressing his artistic deeply held feelings. Most of the time, they appeared as brushstrokes that hinted at a series of letters and alphabets, creating texts. Hedi began to realize that his artistic impulses had found form in words, even though they might not be entirely legible. He was not trying to explore calligraphic art, though, as he did not seem to be elaborating on his brushstrokes nor apply a sense of religious contemplation to his work. Instead, he seemed to be leaning more toward those gestural aspects more characteristic of abstract expressionism. The legibility of his words and texts on canvas is low, if any. They can be likened to 'mumbblings', clamorous and overlapping with one another, even bleeding into one another. Sometimes, letters and words jump up to provide slivers of meaning that add to the painting's lyrical appeal.

At the time of writing, Hedi is in the midst of grappling anew with his paint-

ing praxis. He no longer tries to "write". His brushstrokes and overlapping gestures no longer imply (the formation of) words. At a glance, they seem to be traces or trails of the many gestural moments found or made during Hedi's painting process.

In any case, Hedi continues to attempt to underscore his painting practice as a practice of communication. However, what kind of communication does Hedi aim for with his paintings?

Communication is a process whereby information is sent between A and B using known and accepted languages. However, Hedi has felt the need to rethink about how he can access information which he wishes to convey to those who view his paintings. Hedi once stated that he paints based on a desire to note down and record the way he experiences/senses daily phenomena. Through his works, he attempts to become a phenomenological body that experiences sense-transmitted daily occurrences free from intervening rationalizations that oftentimes only serve to abridge our way of perceiving the world.

The study of phenomenology criticizes empiricism and intellectualism that insists on the separation between body and mind. Phenomenology contests the claim that only the mind has the capacity for sensitivity, despite the fact that sensory sensitivity is not entirely regulated by the mind. The body is not merely a sensory instrument that serves only as a connection between the mind and world phenomena.

The study of phenomenology also understands that experience is not a kind of memory formed by thought, but rather by reality as experienced and sensed by the body. Thus, perceiving/perception is not just an act of memorizing/remembrance, but also an act of re-experiencing previous events in deeper and more reflective ways. Regarding memory, the philosopher Merleau-Ponty positioned the body as an entity that experiences, senses, and gives consciousness to the subject.

This understanding helps create a foundation for new understandings of the body's perceptual activities that is no longer secondary or subordinate to the individual. The body is also capable of sense-transmitted perception; it is not just to hear or see things. The body is also no longer bound to prejudices formed by the mind. The body is able to stand equal with the mind and the soul. The body and mind, together, mark the existence of the subject.

I have earlier mentioned that painting is a way for Hedi to take up the role of a phenomenological entity. The layers he

has wrought, or will make, do not come fully-formed in an immediate sense. It involves acts of repetition, layering, staining, etc. As ways for Hedi to negate the intervention of the mind (cognition) when sensing his way through daily phenomena.

Though it may look easy, abstract painting is not as simple as we might think. In it, Hedi discovers a demanding and energy-consuming challenge. Each time Hedi stains his canvas spaces, each time he applies even the minutest strokes, he finds himself beset by a wave of feelings. Not infrequently, he will find himself doubting the steps he has taken, the color choices he has made. After filling in certain spaces, he will often create a distance in order to look at and consider his work. If he feels something to be lacking from his (artistic) expression, or that he has not transmitted an authentic output from what he feels should be the truest and most essential perception of a given phenomenon, then Hedi will quickly cover/overlay those brushstrokes. A painting, then, is the sum-consequence of a string of failures.

Hedi likens the brushstrokes on his paintings to a collection of noise. From a communications theory standpoint, noise can be identified as messages whose distribution processes have been disrupted so much so that they become difficult to understand. In Hedi's understanding, "noise" is the result of how he perceives/senses reality outside of accepted languages.

I began to notice the existence of such 'noise' around the time when Hedi began experimenting with spray paint on canvas. This type of paint creates traces that are more ambiguous in nature. Compared to acrylic or oil paints, spray paint tends to appear more untextured. Lines might appear solid centrally but fade/feather closer to the edges. This is in part thanks to its own physical characteristic as aerosol paint. The more paint is applied to the center of the spray, the more saturated it will be. Realizing that the spray nozzle controls paint output, Hedi decides to pay less care to it. Even after a number of sprays, Hedi will not clean the nozzle from any residual paint, making it less likely for him to be able to control paint distribution. This reminds me of how Hedi tries to extend his brush handles in order to achieve more authentic and spontaneous expressions.

After a few experimentations, Hedi has found a comfortable level for himself, where these traces dissolve or become swathed by layers or brushes of acrylic paint. These vanishing traces demonstrate depth. Much like light that shines from a distant, fog-observed lighthouse. These traces are also akin

to messages (originating) from the past, which have been overlaid by numerous impediments that turn them into 'noise'. Like these memories, brushstrokes are overlaid by other brushstrokes, implying past memories that continue to call from a distance within a dream.

The paintings in this exhibition perhaps serve to demonstrate Hedi's more critical understanding (about the world). Hedi's paintings become a kind of illustration of how there will always be choices made available, or decisions to be debated upon. They also reflect a sort of quietude, or silence, that accompanies the artist's anxieties as he contemplates himself and his life. Hedi's painting process becomes a tool that he, himself, can use to read into or test his life decisions.

Painting becomes an instrument for Hedi to continue questioning his previously-formed/previously-held understandings about various things. Painting becomes a way for him to disengage cognitive inclinations/interventions from his understandings or perceptions of a given phenomenon. Painting helps Hedi, personally, to delay any sort of hasty conclusions, to put a distance between himself and prejudice. It encourages him to reflect upon his interactions with the world and to continue to assess his way of forming an understanding of it.

I wish to close this essay by quoting Hedi's own statement, reflective of his painting practice, in which painting is "connected to the conscious and sub-conscious thought. In which both are often influenced by past experiences as well as by assumptions of (what) the future (holds)..."

Chabib Duta Hapsoro
Exhibition Curator

Bibliography:

Saras Dewi, Ekofenomenologi: Mengurai Disekuilibrium Relasi Manusia dengan Alam (Lit. Ecophenomenology: Unraveling the Disequilibrium in Man's Relationship with Nature), Penerbit Marjin Kiri, (2015).

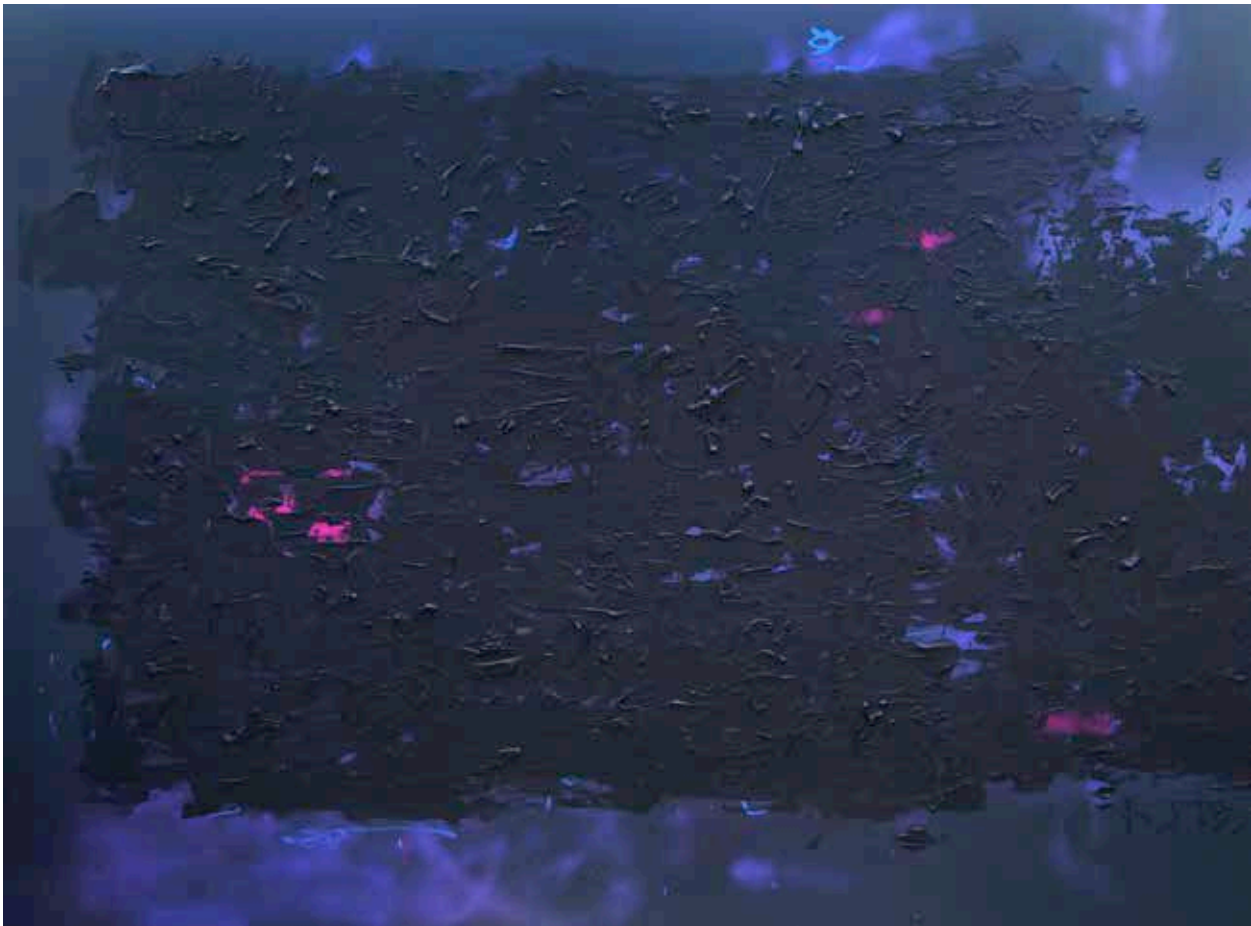


¹Jelegong is a subdistrict (or administrative village) in the Regency of Bandung, West Java. Founded by Odin Rohidin in the Sixties, Jelegong is known as a 'painters' village that takes painting commissions. Although they are mostly known for their natural landscapes, Jelegong painters also take commissions for other types of paintings, e.g. flowers, fish, etc.



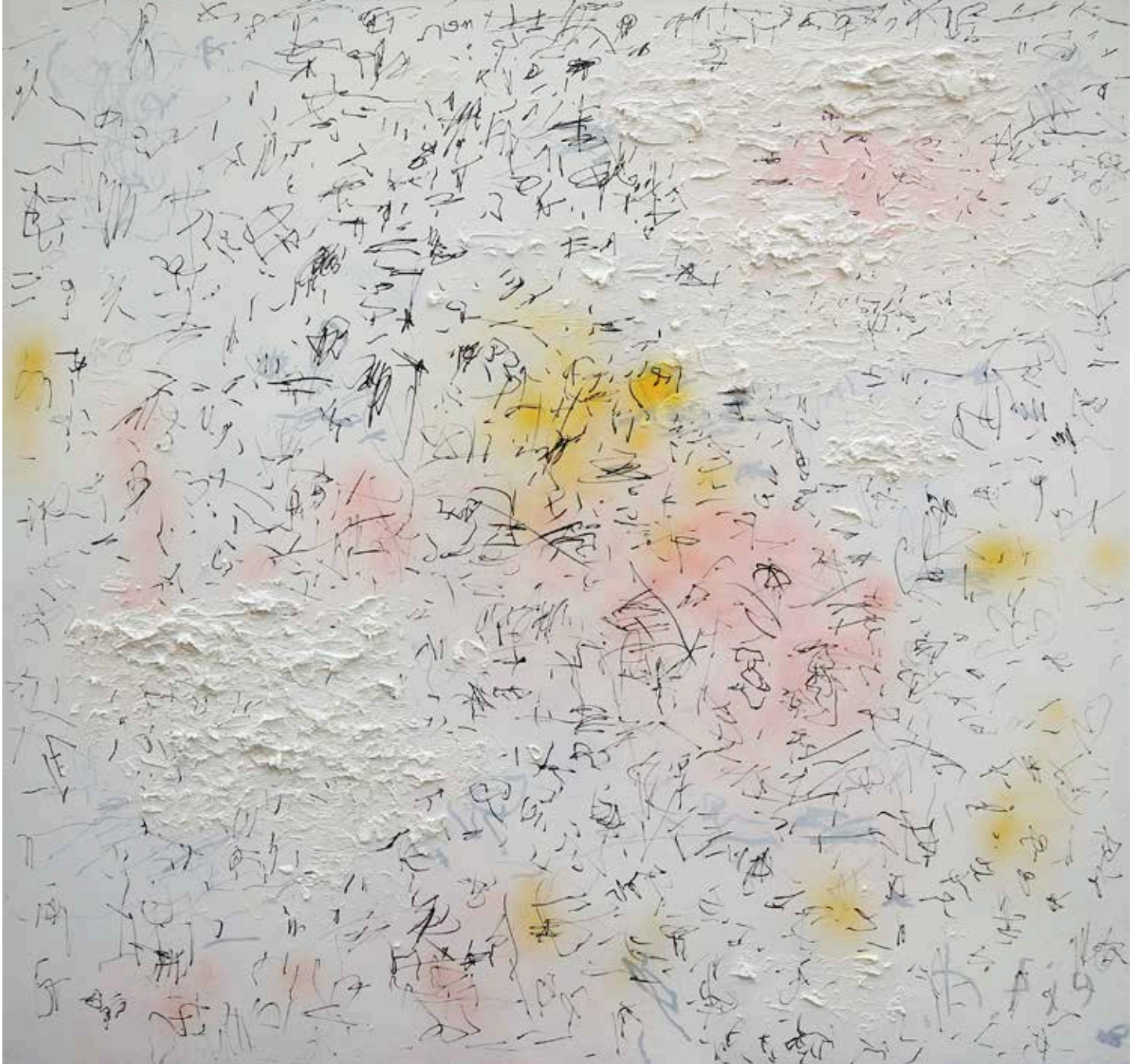


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LIST of ARTWORK

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 Menyeret Siang Ke Tepi Langit
Acrylic, Spray paint, and
Marker on Canvas
300 cm x 190 cm
2019 | 6 Dhuha di Ujung Risau
Acrylic, Spray paint,
Rubber Pasta, and Marker
on Canvas
200 cm x 200 cm
2019 | 11 Berarak di Belantara Merah
Acrylic, Spray paint, and
Marker on Canvas
190 cm x 300 cm
2019 |
| 2 Serpihan Ingatan di Atas Hamparan Hijau
Acrylic, Spray Paint,
Rubber Pasta, and Marker
on Canvas
180 cm x 240 cm
2019 | 7 Hampar Ingatan
Acrylic, Spray paint,
Rubber Pasta, and Marker
on Canvas
200 cm x 200 cm
2019 | 12 Gumam #5: Cuma Debu yang Takut Hujan
Acrylic and Charcoal on
Canvas
200 cm x 200 cm
2018 |
| 3 Hentakan Ujung Malam
Acrylic, Spray Paint,
Rubber Pasta, and Marker
on Canvas
180 cm x 240 cm
2019 | 8 Riuh Bersama Hitam
Acrylic and Charcoal on
Canvas
150 cm 150 cm
2019 | 13 Luruh Hitam dalam Perayaan
Acrylic, Rubber Pasta, Oil
Bar, and Charcoal on
Canvas
200 cm x 200 cm
2018 |
| 4 Pagi Putih
Acrylic, Spray Paint,
Rubber Pasta, and Marker
on Canvas
150 cm x 150 cm
2019 | 9 Menakar Dua Sisi
Acrylic, Spray Paint,
Rubber Pasta, and Marker
on Canvas
200 cm x 200 cm
2019 | 14 Sesaat Melintas Merah
Acrylic, Spray paint,
Rubber Pasta and Marker
on Canvas
200 cm x 200 cm
2019 |
| 5 Racau Menanda Kabut
Acrylic, Spray paint,
Rubber Pasta, and Marker
on Canvas
150 cm 150 cm
2019 | 10 Mengingat Senja
Acrylic, Spray paint, and
Marker on Canvas
180 cm x 240 cm
2019 | |

HEDI SOETARDJA

Born in Bandung, 1976. Joined Sanggar Griya Seni Popo Iskandar (GSPI) in 2006, and Komunitas Magma in 2008. In 2009, Hedi joined Sekolah Seni Sabtu (S3) in Rumah Proses Bandung.

Solo Exhibition

- 2017 *Gumam*, Bale Project, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia.

Group Exhibition

- 2018 *SSAS/AS/IDEAS*, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia.
2017 *UOB Painting of The Year*, UOB plaza Jakarta, Indonesia.
2017 *Transit #4: Spektrum*, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia.
2016 *BBNK (Binal Bandung Nu Kontemporer)*, Galeri Rumah Proses, Bandung, Indonesia.
2014 *Lestari*, Bale Pare, Kota Baru Parahyangan, Bandung, Indonesia.
2014 *Telik Sandi*, Ghin Art Space, Jelegong, Bandung, Indonesia.
2012 *Kidung Hayat*, Griya seni Popo Iskandar, Bandung, Indonesia.

- 2010 *Tribute to Sudjojono*, Studio Rosid, Bandung, Indonesia.

- 2009 *Aku*, Galeri Rumah Proses Bandung, Indonesia.

- 2009 *Connection*, Alilla, Jakarta, Indonesia.

- 2009 *Mereka tidak sendiri*, Museum Seni Barli Bandung, Indonesia.

Selected Workshops

- 2013 *Jaga Lembur Bumi Siliwangi*, Tabuga, Bandung, Indonesia.
2013 *Eksistensi Rupa*, Taman Budaya Jawa Barat, Bandung, Indonesia.

Recidency

- 2017 *Transit #4: Spectrum*, Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia.