

Kemal Ezedine

One of the highlights of “Art Moments”, the June group exhibition at the Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta was the line compositions by Indonesian artist Kemal Ezedine. Entitled the “Mantra Patah Series” (broken mantra) Ezedine presented a large mural, flowing across the floor and onto the walls in combination with three works on aluminium. His configurations emphasized the distinct aesthetic impact that can only be realized by contrasting black contours upon white backgrounds, and that the power of the line to communicate is second to none.

At a glance Ezedine’s beautiful milieu appears abstract. Sweeping lines adorn the floor then fuse and configure into details. Closer inspection allows obscurity to give way to a union of fantastic imagery. The mural gracefully emerges with the feature compositions on the walls in which the artist’s contemporary awareness depicts Balinese icons in a dynamic and innovative manner. The juxtaposition of black against white and the balance between details and space combine to enhance the visual experience and Ezedine’s surreal descriptions fascinate and capture the imagination.

The “Mantra Patah Series” takes its inspiration from the technical and philosophical heart of Balinese art. “Balinese sacred drawings (rerajahan) are considered as closed mantras that are accompanied by manuscripts, spoken chants and scribed on palm leaves, fabric, paper and metal. Often used to heal, create magic, or to cast spells, they are treated as confidential. If these images are opened it is believed that their magical power will be lost,” says Ezedine. The artist strives to deconstruct these codes into the framework of contemporary artistic thought; and how these images can function and be assessed in a drawing medium with the values remaining attached.

Born in Yogyakarta in 1978, a graduate from the faculty of art and design at the Bandung Institute of Technology, since 2011 Ezedine has been living and working in Ubud, and his interactions with Balinese artists have led him on a new creative journey. Inspired to investigate a new paradigm in Balinese painting Ezedine along with three other Balinese artists in 2013 formed a collective/institution – the Neo Pitamaha. Taking their name from the legendary artists association born in the 1930’s in Ubud during a revolutionary period when traditional art was being modernized for the new and expanding international market - the Pitamaha’s oversaw the successful development of this new genre of art that helped communicate the Balinese culture around the world.

Balinese art is a unique fusion of motifs from India and China with Hindu, Islamic and local references that has evolved over hundreds of years. It features complex constructions of individual compositions, held together with decorative patterns that allow the details to be read according to a larger narrative. While its accounts are designed to promote good moral conduct, the painterly skills are very limited compared to western techniques. Its basic fundamental is drawing which has been accepted as a style of painting.

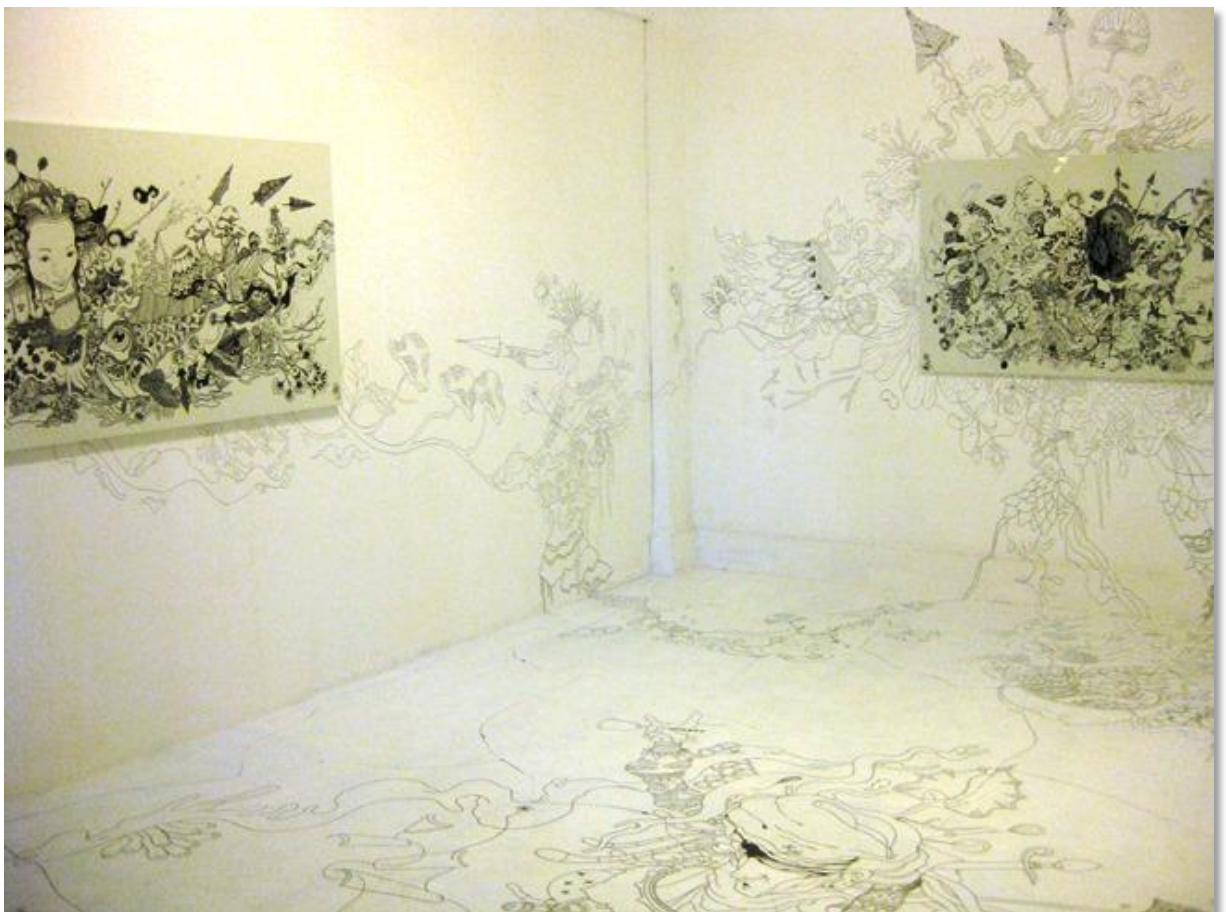
“We (the members of the Neo Pita Maha) have knowledge of history, culture, narratives and symbols within Balinese art yet we do not use this for our art discourse. We aim to reinterpret this from a contemporary art perspective - retaining the principles involved with the techniques and methods. By opening this to new viewpoints we endeavour to awaken new spirit and introduce a fresh model of possibilities into Balinese art,” Ezedine says.

Content to step away from conventional painting, he adds, “I am fascinated by the pure and simple properties of linear illustrations and am passionate about my creative process. My compositions grow organically as my ideas become fluid and transform into a form of visual writing. My new work is undergoing changes and becoming more dynamic.”

Since 2014 the Neo Pitamaha have exhibited at high profile events in Bandung, Semarang and Art Jog 2014 in Yogyakarta. Ezedine’s most recent monumental construction will be a feature at the upcoming Bazaar Art Jakarta 2015 (BAJ15) art fair, 27-30 August at the Ritz-Carlton Jakarta Hotel, Pacific Place. “BAJ15 is the most prestigious boutique art fair in SE Asia, and this year is much larger with over 50 local and international participating galleries,” says BAJ15 Fair Director Leo Silitonga. “Being the country’s premiere art fair we endeavor to consolidate Jakarta’s presence on the international art map while promoting Indonesian art and cultural tourism.”



Mantra Patah Series 2015 Kemal Ezedine, Image Richard Horstman



'Mantra Patah Series 2015, Kemal Ezedine, Photo Richard Horstman

This year Enin Supriyanto, one of Indonesia's most renowned art curators, has been invited to design and organize special events for BAJ15. A series of lectures and Art Talks will be led by a number of experts and curators of international caliber, two of the subjects of discussion will be art biennales and private museums. Wishing to engage a larger audience the BAJ15's special activities include Kids Art, activities for children, and the Pacific Place Mall Art Display, featuring a collection of art works around the mall. The BAJ15 opening on 28 August will include art performances by Agung Kurniawan, Pande Besi and Tromarama. At 1.30pm on 29th will be an art auction fund raising event for the Jakarta Biennale and the Jogja Biennale. "Since our first fair in 2009 we have continually been improving the quality of the event becoming more selective with gallery participants while increasing our attention upon the program of special events," Leo adds.

As a part of the special program for artists outside of the BAJ15 gallery platform, Ezedine's works, taking the form of nine 200 x 180cm panels, reveal the latest development in the artists style. Coherent with the elements that constitute Balinese art, drawing along with colour wash techniques, he introduces colour into his new compositions via washes of oil medium. These coloured forms appear, however, without the containing line that is a defining element of the Balinese tradition. Introducing a fresh dimension of visual contrast as dynamic hues complement and add new life to the compositions, potent colour becomes an irresistible feature of Ezedine's new works.

Bazaar Art Jakarta 2015

August 27-30

The Ritz-Carlton Jakarta Pacific Place Jakarta

Published in Jakarta Globe July 26, 2015



'Mantra Patah Seires' 2015, Image. Richard Horstman

