

## **Sudjojono – the Father of Indonesian Modern Art**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, during a period of contemporary art that was popularized by beautiful landscape paintings by European artists living in the then Dutch East Indies, it was the initial courage and vision of one Indonesian artist that was to be instrumental in the new direction of modern Indonesian art.

Seabad Sudjojono (b. Sumatra 1913-86) a talented young artist launched vehement opposition to this art he sarcastically dubbed “Mooi Indies” (pretty pictures). Although these works were considered technically and aesthetically first rate they were also seen by Indonesian artists as being elitist, commercially exploitive and reflecting nothing about the social realities of the Indonesian lower class.

In 1938 Sudjojono along with colleague Agus Djaja founded the highly influential artists collective PERSAGI (the Indonesian Painters Association). They stipulated that contemporary art should reflect the personal views of the artist so as to express the social thoughts that characterize the nation. During a crucial period in the Dutch colonial occupation, as a consequence this importantly began the search for a new identity and a nationalistic painting style.

In 1940 PERSAGI held its first exhibition in a bookstore in Bataiva (Jakarta), at the time Indonesian artist were not allowed to exhibit their works alongside Dutch. The Dutch artists however were so impressed by the exhibition that soon after the Kunstkring, an exclusive Dutch club, opened its doors to the members of PERSAGI who held their next exhibition at the club in 1941.

Sudjojono’s painting “Kinderan Met Kat” won an award of recognition and was to be justifiably cited in Indonesian art history.

PERGAGI played a significant role in the development of Indonesian contemporary art until it was forcibly disbanded in 1942 by the occupying Japanese forces.

As an artist, thinker, writer, organizer, provocateur and a man with unique valor and foresight Sudjojono directed the course of the new Indonesian fine arts movement and in 1949 a senior art critic labeled him the father of Indonesian modern art.

In celebration of the life of Sudjojono a series of exhibitions and events began in Bali at the House of Masks & Puppets Setiadarma in Ubud on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October with the exhibition, “Sudjojono 1913-2013”, a collection of drawings, illustrations, photographs and paintings belonging to the family of the artist.

Including a program of youths and children’s art workshops, art discussions, a tour of the iconic Kunstkring Paleis in Jakarta, an exhibition in Singapore January 2014 and the main exhibition “Seabad S. Sudjojono” at the National Museum in Jakarta 12-22 December, with a book launch. This program is sure to reignite interest in Sudjojono and his extraordinary contribution to Indonesian modern art.

The exhibition opening on Sunday evening at Setiadarma was highlighted by the soulful voice of Rose Pandanwangi, former wife of Sudjojono, who seduced the audience of many senior figures of Bali art community, with a presentation of her favorite songs, including the Indonesian national anthem.

Of special interest in the exhibition is a rare 1985 portrait of Sudjojono and Rose, “Lagu Setelah 26 Tahun” a dynamic colorist work commemorating 26 years of marriage with Rose.

The ambience of this exhibition is perfectly mirrored and complimented within the beautiful traditional Javanese teak pavilion at Setiadarma.

“Seabad Sudjojono 1913-2013” continues until the 8<sup>th</sup> November, 2013 at the House of Masks & Puppets Setiadarma, Jalan Tegal Bingin, Tengkulak Tengah, Kemenuh, Gianyar, Bali.

Open daily 9am – 6pm.

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Sudjojono, Self Portrait 1975, oil on canvas, 100x50cm, Image Courtesy Sudjojono Family



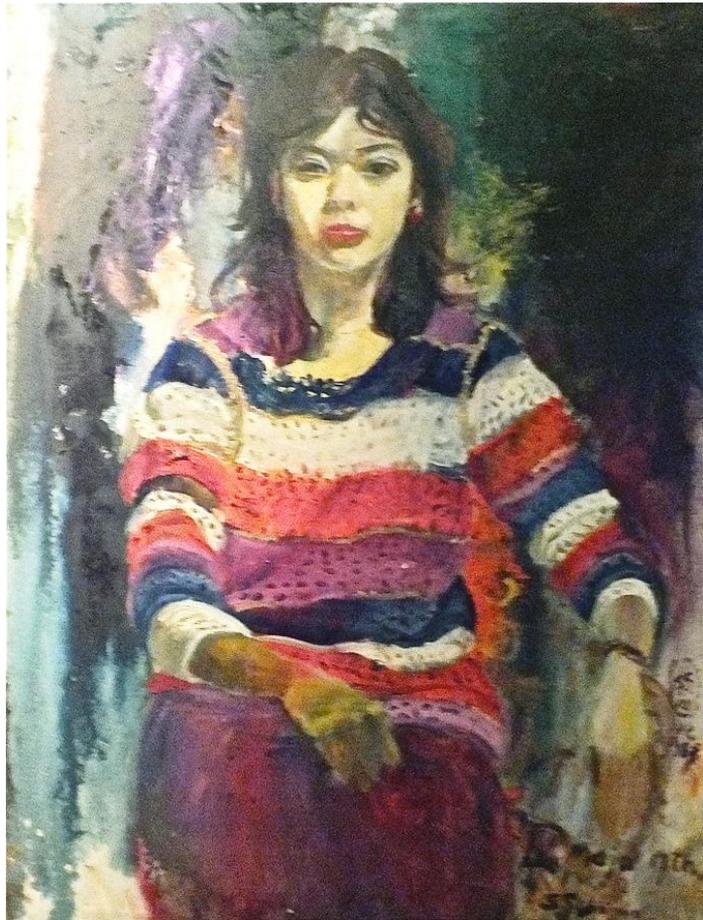
Sudjojono, Si Optimis 1982, oil on canvas 89x86cm. Image Courtesy Sudjojono Family



Sudjojono, Brothers 1973, oil on canvas, Photo courtesy Sudjojono Family.



Sudjojono, Anak-anak Gadis 1976, oil on canvas 110x90cm



Sudjojono, Maya 17 Tahun, oil on canvas 1983, Image courtesy Sudjojono Family