

Low Stream - Exhibition Review – Bali Daily

Braving weather in direct contrast to the sultry tropics, artist from Bali recently visited Jeju Island, South Korea to build on an artistic relationship that began back in 2005.

“Low Stream”, Indonesia – Korea Contemporary Art Exhibition opened on the 18th January, running through to 25th February at the Jeju Museum of Contemporary Art. The exhibition continues on from last May’s exhibition “Determination of Two Islands”, at the Galeri Nasional in Jakarta, and the ongoing intercultural exchange program that through artistic and cultural interaction promises to forge even stronger ties between the two Asian nations.

Jeju, located 60 kilometers off the southern coast of Korea, and Bali, share distinctive similarities, dramatic volcanic landscapes with traditional cultures that hold strong beliefs in the existence of a supernatural world that affect everyday life. The cultures retain strong agrarian influences, and along with the stunning natural attractions have all combined to become the foundations for thriving tourist economies. These cultural parallels have led to the formal institutionalization of cooperation via a “Sister Province” agreement between the governments of Bali and the special self governing province of Jeju.

The islands share a dark history of events that were instrumental in the shaping of the individual nations, and which materialize as themes in the works by Korean artists Song Jang Sup, Yang Mi Keyoung and in Balinese painter Agung Mangu Putra’s composition “1965” that reveals atrocities from the anti communist purge that swept Indonesia during that year.

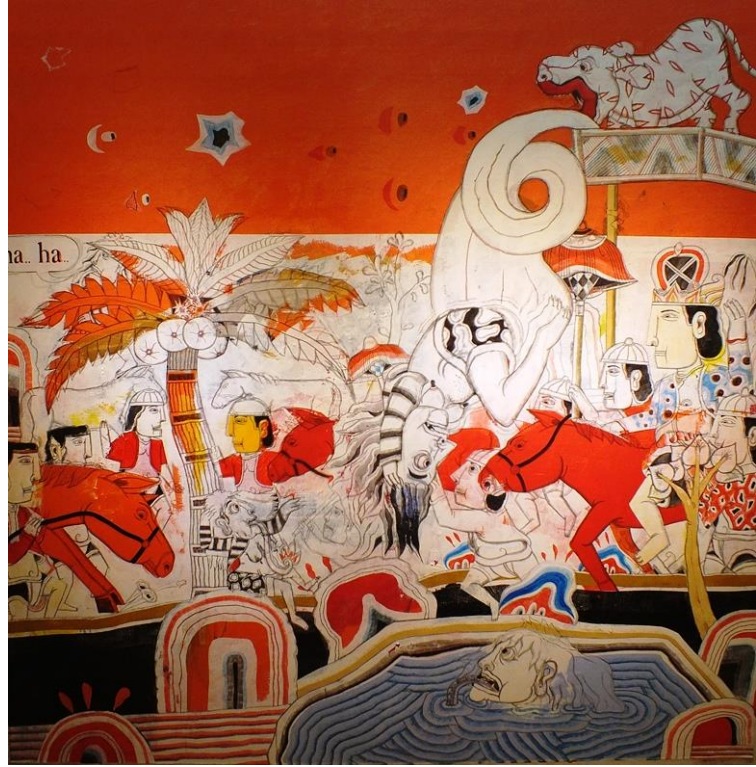
The more recent impact of modernity is especially visible in the tourism development in Jeju as it is here in Bali, one prominent feature, however of the infrastructure that marks Jeju is the progressive roads networks that service the island.

During the week excursion in Jeju as guests of the local artist Jung Yong Sung, Kang Yo Bae and Yang Mi Kyeong the foreign artists, who were joined by their families visited art museums, galleries, icons of cultural interest, and the islands highest point, the snow capped Mt. Hallasan. For some of the Indonesians it was their first experience with snow.

An iconic feature of the ancient Jeju culture are the traditional statues carved from black volcanic rock. The “grandfather stones” or dol hareubang were used to scare off invaders to the island. Anthropologists say the phallic-shaped artifacts owe their origins to a shamanistic mushroom cult and remain a symbol of a distinct culture populated by a rich spiritual and mythological life.

Exhibiting Indonesian in “Low Stream” are from different generations, senior artists Nyoman Gunarsa (b. 1944), Made Wianta, Tjandra Kirana, Chusin Setiadikara (b.1949), Agung Mangu Putra, Ketut Susena (b. 1969), Wayan “Suklu” Sujana and promising young artists Ketut Teja Astawa and Wayan Sudarna Putra (b.1976). Leading Balinese gallerist Tony Raka, who was also instrumental in organizing the exchange programs also accompanied the group.

Indonesian curator Arif Bagus Prasetyo participated in the Korea – Indonesian Contemporary Art discussion on the 18th January prior to the exhibition opening along with the Korean art critic Kim Yu Jeong. Of particular interest was a presentation outlining a brief history of contemporary in Korea and highlighted by the role that socio/political events on Jeju had contributed to the unique story of the contemporary development art in Korea. The exhibitions theme “Low Stream” is inspired by the ongoing role contemporary artists must play in the struggle for democracy.



Confused During the War - Teja Astawa, 2014



