

Embargoed till 22 August 2008
Press Release

Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon 23 August – 9 November 2008



The Man With The Short Sword
I Nyoman Masriadi
2006

(22 August 2008) Singapore Art Museum (SAM) is proud to present *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon*, the celebrated contemporary Indonesian artist I Nyoman Masriadi's first regional and international solo exhibition. This show forms part of SAM's exhibition programme in showcasing works of key modern and contemporary Southeast Asian artists, continuing on from solo exhibitions such as Affandi and Widayat in 2007. This new exhibition highlights Masriadi's unique visual language of painting – striking visual vocabulary and visual imageries strongly influenced by anime, cyber-gaming and comics. The exhibition features over 30 selected works from private collections in Indonesia, Singapore and Hong Kong, including early works from 1998 to latest works.

The exhibition opening will be officiated by Guest of Honour, Mr Kwee Liong Keng, Honorary Chairman of Singapore Art Museum, on 22 August 2008, Friday, 7pm, at 8Q sam. Media preview led by the curators will be held on the same day at 11am at 8Q sam.

Born in Bali in 1973, I Nyoman Masriadi is one of the most influential and acclaimed artists to have emerged from Southeast Asia in the last decade. Having studied at the Indonesian Institute of Art from 1993 to 1998, Masriadi's distinction as an artist lies in his choice of medium – painting. In the 1990s, Indonesian artists began to work in ephemeral medium such as installation and performance

art, as part of their resistance against the commodification of art. With paintings being sold at high prices in the art market, the practice of painting was viewed as an exemplar of the commodification of art. Masriadi is an artist who holds the firm belief that painting is a form of visual language which speaks beyond the high prices. This forms part of his own resistance to expand his art practice and focuses on the practice of painting.

Says Masriadi, on his art practices “One of my ways of saying something, is through my paintings. I want to speak about something, I want to tell something to people, to criticise. That’s my idea. I’ve always been doing that a lot, if I criticize somebody, if I get angry with somebody, I tell it through my paintings.” As an artist, Masriadi feels his career is inevitably bound to painting and its critics, collectors and writers.

The exhibition, *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon*, desires to evoke and present a striking portrait of Masriadi, with a number of works that reveal Masriadi’s thoughts and opinions on being an artist. The exhibition is divided into four thematic sections: *Hitam Adalah Senjata Terakhir Aku (Black Is My Last Weapon)*, *Geli-Geli (Ticklish)*, *Saya Yang Dapat! (I Got It!)* and *Memperjuangkan Lukisan (Fighting to Paint)*. The show has been designed to create a dynamic interaction between the artworks and the exhibition design. At the heart of the exhibition are representative paintings that span the artist’s entire career. The artworks are accompanied with specially commissioned soundscapes, interactive flash games and a documentary video. The multi-layered gallery experience contributes to a deeper appreciation of the life of Masriadi, and offers exciting new perspectives to his works.

Says Director, Singapore Art Museum, Mr Kwok Kian Chow, “This solo exhibition serves as an insight into Masriadi’s art world, whose paintings embody cultural sensitivity and capture conditions and situations in everyday life where power relations are played out.”

Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon opens to public on 23 August and ends on 9 November 2008.

Please refer to the Exhibition Fact Sheet for more information:

Backgrounder of Exhibition
Biography of I Nyoman Masriadi
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For more information, visit www.singart.com

Monday to Sunday : 10am to 7pm, with extended hours and
FREE Admission on Friday from 6pm to 9pm

Singapore Art Museum is located at 71 Bras Basah Road, Singapore 189555

8Q sam is located at 8 Queen Street, Singapore 188535

For general enquiries, please contact Front desk at 6332 3222.
For more information, visit www.singart.com

Exhibition Fact Sheet

Title: *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon*
Artist: I Nyoman Masriadi

Duration: 23 August to 9 November 2008
Exhibition Venue: 8Q sam

Backgrounder

Significance of Exhibition: *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon* is the first solo exhibition of the celebrated contemporary Indonesian artist I Nyoman Masriadi. This show forms part of SAM's exhibition programme in showcasing works of key modern and contemporary Southeast Asian artists, continuing on from solo exhibitions of Affandi and Widayat, more among other, presented in 2007.

Curatorial Concepts of Exhibition: The show is designed to create a dynamic interaction between the artworks and the exhibition design. At the heart of the exhibition are representative paintings that span the artist's entire career. The artworks are accompanied with specially commissioned soundscape, interactive flash games and a documentary video. The multi-layered gallery experience contributes a deeper appreciation the life of Masriadi and offers exciting new perspectives to his works.

Number of Artwork: 32 paintings

Range of Artwork: From year 1998 to 2008

Source of exhibits: On loan from private collections in the region, including Indonesia, Singapore and Hong Kong

Exhibition Catalogue: A full coloured and illustrated catalogue accompanies the exhibition, and includes a curatorial essay co-written by Seng Yu Jin and Wang Zineng and a biographical essay on Masriadi written by M. Dwi Marianto, a noted Indonesian artist and critic, that gives new insights into Masriadi's art world.

Curators:

Seng Yu Jin graduated from the National University of Singapore with a Master of Arts in History. He is assistant curator with the National Art Gallery, Singapore. To date he has curated shows at the Singapore Art Museum such as *Affandi - A Painter of Genius* (2007) and *From Words to Pictures: Art During the Emergency* (2007). He is also the co-curator of *The Artist Village Show* (August 2008).

Wang Zineng graduated in Southeast Asian Studies from the National University of Singapore in 2007. He presently shuttles Singapore and Indonesia, researching on modern and contemporary Indonesian art. His most recent curatorial project was *Strategies Towards the Real: S. Sudjojono and Contemporary Indonesian Art* (NUS Museum, 2008).

Four thematic sections of the Exhibition

Hitam Adalah Senjata Terakhir Aku (Black Is My Last Weapon): This section traces the evolution of the artist's signature black-skinned figures. The figures inhabit different identities and personalities in each of his canvases; they date as far back as the beginning of his career as a painter in 1998 to some of the paintings completed in the last two years with an illusionist emphasis on figurative mass.

Geli-Geli (Ticklish): This section makes reference to humour and comical elements in Masriadi's paintings. The paintings displayed under this section exemplify these elements which are sometimes sardonic, sometimes wry, and yet at other times tongue-in-cheek. Masriadi's brand of humour cannot be easily encapsulated. His wit is abrasive, light-hearted and is distinctly non-moralising.

Saya Yang Dapat! (I Got It!): This section focuses on Masriadi's interest in conditions and situations in everyday life where power relations are played out. His painted figures often emerge in sports settings, or in more general settings of conflict, rivalry and competition. Instances of masochism, egoism, and unbridled human ambition surface in these arenas. Often these paintings are read as oblique criticisms of the state of Indonesian and world politics.

Memperjuangkan Lukisan (Fighting to Paint): This section gathers a number of works that reveal Masriadi's thoughts and opinions on being an artist whose career is inevitably bound to painting, critics, collectors, and writers. Nothing and no one in the artworld seems sacrilegious. Masriadi's adopted attitude of irreverence and brashness is tied to his insistence on continuing to paint and seeking to advance his own practice in painting. This commitment reveals itself to be opposed to painting as a mean to an end and critics and curators who 'favour' performance and new media art.

About I Nyoman Masriadi

Biography

- Born in Gianyar, Bali in 1973, I Nyoman Masriadi studied at the Indonesian Institute of Art, Yogyakarta, from 1993 to 1998. He was awarded the prize for Best Painting at the Dies Natalis ISI Yogyakarta in 1997, and he has participated in group exhibitions in Australia, Netherlands, and Indonesia.

Art Practice

- Masriadi focuses on the practice of painting and his distinction as an artist lies in his choice of medium.
- Visual imageries and narratives: Strongly influenced by Japanese anime, cyber-gaming and comics.
- Many of the paintings are autobiographical to varying extent.
- Underlined by detached and objective daily observation of people, the art world and society at large, his visual vocabulary is always relevant, fresh and striking.

Group Exhibitions

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| 2002 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Not Just Political' at H. Widayat Museum, Magelang • 'Terumba Karang' Exhibition |
| 2000 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Seni Rupa Campur' Exhibition at Beeldende Kunst (DBK), Dordrecht Netherland |
| 1999 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biennale VI at Purna Budaya, Yogyakarta • 'Knalpot' Exhibition at Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta • Duet Exhibition with I GAK Murniasih at Cement Art House, Yogyakarta Biennale VI at Purna Budaya, Yogyakarta |
| 1998 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Exhibition at Rudana Museum, Ubud, Bali • An Exhibition at Imperial Hotel, Kuta, Bali • Sanggar Dewata Indonesia Exhibition at Bentend Vredebung, Yogyakarta |
| 1997 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kelompok 7 Exhibition – Sanggar Dewata Indonesian at Bentara Budaya, Yogyakarta • Dies Natalis Indonesian Art Institute Exhibition, Yogyakarta |
| 1996 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Dialog Between Two City" Exhibition at Purna Budaya, Yogyakarta • Kelompok 7 Exhibition – Sanggar Dewata Indonesian at Sika Gallery, Ubud, Bali • Sanggar Dewata Indonesian Exhibition at Taman Budaya Surakarta, Surakarta • Young Artist II Exhibition at Bentend Vredebung, Yogyakarta |
| 1995 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dies Natalis Indonesian Art Institute Exhibition, Yogyakarta • Collaboration Exhibition with Australian Art Student, Yogyakarta • Indonesian Art Festival at Bentend Vredebung, Yogyakarta • Sanggar Dewata Exhibition at Purna Budaya, Yogyakarta • Sanggar Dewata Indonesian at Sika Gallery, Ubud, Bali |
| 1994 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hitam Putih + Plus" an exhibition of Kelompok Prasadha at Indonesian Art Institute, Gampingan Yogyakarta |

Selected Key Artworks



No More Game
2003
200 x 145cm
Acrylic on canvas

No More Game (2003) is a poignant portrait of Masriadi the artist – a portrait aspiring not towards physical likeness but rather offering a candid portrayal of the artist as worn-out artist-protagonist, torn between his painterly ambitions and weaknesses. A viewer of the picture confronts an exhausted protagonist squarely in a study room. The latter's head is thrown back, eyes under a draped jacket, limbs sprawled out; the study room is heavy with the air of fatigue and spent energy. Two piles of books lie to either side of the protagonist whilst note paper and books, some open and some half-opened, are strewn messily around.

The picture is embedded with a codified narrative accessible to those familiar with Masriadi's paintings. The titles of all the books – clearly imprinted on the book spines – are the titles of paintings that Masriadi had completed before the completion of this painting. Through this, the repository of books in the picture comes to bear the symbolic significance of his *oeuvre*, his profession as artist and painter. Here Masriadi the painter has clearly come up against a head wall, his passion, energy and perhaps even endeavours to paint seemingly drained. The imagery of the painting and its symbolic meaning invokes a terse juxtaposition with its title, *No More Game*. In the title, a steely determination is present, clearly amiss in the enervated scene we observe.

Willpower and ability exists in dramatic opposition in *No More Game*. With its unmistakable autobiographical disposition, the work frames a self-conscious portrait of the artist as a painter caught in the throes of creative impasse. It is artless as an exposé, a witty evocation of a painter's *cul-de-sac*.



The Man With The Short Sword

2006
150 x 140 cm
Acrylic on canvas

The Man with the Short Sword (2006) is an important work from Masriadi's repertoire of black-skinned figures which he has consistently been painting since 1998. That was the year that Masriadi returned from Bali, his birth island, to Yogyakarta, where he had taken a year off studies at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI), Yogyakarta. He returned as an unknown young painter, but one brimming with confidence at having found a mode of figuration that he felt answered his need as a painter, a figurative painter, counter to the curriculum in Indonesian Institute of the Arts (ISI) that emphasised the teaching of abstraction visual tendencies.

One of Masriadi's earliest black-skinned figure, *Angels* (1998) is shown in this exhibition draws from the cubist tradition, with surface planes intersecting at random angles and a deceptively shallow picture surface. Even though abstracted, the angel figure is unmistakable with its magnificent wings and limbs. The angel adopts a stance of readiness, its red sentinel eyes holding the viewer's focus. *The Man with the Short Sword* depicts not an angel but the same sense of readiness is nevertheless present in this figure as with the angel figure of the previous painting. A muscular male is depicted, every inch of his torso painstakingly defined. His chin protrudes demanding; a disposition accented by his narrowed eyes and pursed lips. This countenance is matched by the figure's deportment, seemingly expressive of a patience fast wearing thin. Propped up against a sword, the muscular man simultaneously flexes and grunts, seemingly looking to assert a presence within the picture's painted world.

The Man with the Short Sword bears a stronger figurative dimension than *Angels*, indicative of the tendency that Masriadi has developed to render the personality of the depicted figure. This is an invitation for us to scrutinise beyond the surface. Who really is this haughty black-skinned muscle man? Hard to miss is his impossibly developed V-shaped torso, distinctly cast against a white background, the envy of many a bodybuilder. We allow our eyes to trace the sensual lines of his torso, almost as if apprehending a silhouette. Our sight lines increasingly converge as we move down the canvas. But when they finally converge at the groin, a great disappointment greets us. The crowning symbol of his male masculinity is but a puny package, a laughable little thing, comparatively undeveloped in relation to the rest of his body.

The hauteur which Masriadi has infused his sword-wielding muscle man now seems like a parody, especially seen alongside his impressively detailed sword. In the mock brawniness of the figure, the painting thus resounds with a deeper meaning – how far can we trust our initial impressions?

Public Programmes in conjunction with *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon*

1. Gaming Masriadi

Flash games will be included in the exhibition space as part of the exhibition thematic design. The flash games imaginatively create contexts for the figures, narratives and situations that Masriadi has begun in his paintings. As interactive media, the flash games will allow exhibition-goers to experience and relate to gaming, an important aspect of Masriadi's life which is inextricably related to his painting practice.

A prize will be given to the player with the highest score at the end of the exhibition.

15 August onwards • 8Q sam • Free

2. The Masriadi Forum

The curators will present the persona and artistic practice of I Nyoman Masriadi based on their interviews with the artist.

Date in October to be confirmed • 2.00pm – 4.00pm • Free • Registration Required

3. Masriadi on Youtube

Interviews with Masriadi will form the core of a documentary video produced in conjunction with the exhibition. The video will be screened in the exhibition space and will provide a different dimension to access the works and life of the artist.

Log on to www.singart.com from 29 August 2008 to view this video.

4. Curatour

Wang Zineng graduated in Southeast Asian Studies from the National University of Singapore in 2007. His most recent curatorial project was *Strategies Towards the Real: S. Sudjojono and Contemporary Indonesian Art* (NUS Museum, 2008). He is the co-curator of *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon*.

19 September • 7.30pm • Meeting point: 8Q sam • Free • Registration

About Singapore Art Museum and 8Q sam

Opened in January 1996, the mission of the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) is to preserve and present the art histories and contemporary art practices of Singapore and the Southeast Asian region. To date, SAM has amassed the world's largest public collection of modern and contemporary Southeast Asian artworks with a growing component in international contemporary art. The museum has presented shows covering both local and international art practices, traditional and cutting edge art expressions. Through strategic alliances with international arts and cultural institutions, SAM has been facilitating visual arts education, exchange, research and development within the region and internationally. Through forging collaborative partnerships and staging innovative programmes to engage different audiences, SAM aims to contribute to an enlarged role in the regional visual arts community and Asian art museology, as well as facilitating developments in art as well as the art sector in Singapore.

8Q sam is a contemporary art space with fresh, multi-disciplinary, interactive and community oriented programming; a place where the public can directly experience the work and ideas of living artists, and in relation to its aesthetic and social context. 8Q sam will support experimental art forms and is envisioned to become a crossroad of new ideas and expressions. 8Q sam aspires to engage a broad and diverse audience, create a sense of community and be a place for contemplation, stimulation, and discussion about contemporary art and culture, and serves as a forum especially for the students. Visitors will have the opportunity to experience the diversity of contemporary art practices ranging from painting and sculpture, to installation, film & video, photography, new media, performance art and sound art.