

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



The Man With The Short Sword
I Nyoman Masriadi
2006

22nd August 2008- Singapore Art Museum is proud to present *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon*, the first solo exhibition of the renowned contemporary Indonesian artist I Nyoman Masriadi. This show forms part of SAM's exhibition programme in showcasing works of top modern and contemporary Southeast Asian artists, continuing from solo exhibitions of Affandi and Widayat in 2007. The exhibition features over 30 selected works from private collections in Indonesia, Singapore and Hong Kong, including early works from 1998 to his most recent 2008 works.

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

The exhibition, *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon*, desires to evoke and present a striking portrait of Masriadi the artist. The curatorial intent is to bring to the fore Masriadi's thoughts and opinions on being an artist, whose career is inevitably tied to critics, collectors, and writers. The show 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)* and it has been designed to create a dynamic atmosphere which allows the works to interact with the exhibition space. At the heart of the exhibition are representative paintings that span the artist's 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 what Masriadi does and it offers an exciting new dynamic to the presentation of his works.

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

Title: *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon*

Artist: I Nyoman Masriadi

Duration: 15 August to 9 November 2008

Exhibition Venue: 8Q sam

Background

Significance of Exhibition: The celebrated contemporary Indonesian artist I Nyoman Masriadi is at the forefront of the burgeoning Indonesian art world. *Masriadi: Black is My Last Weapon* is his first solo exhibition. This show forms part of SAM's exhibition programme in showcasing works of top modern and contemporary Southeast Asian artists, continuing from solo exhibitions of Affandi and Widayat in 2007.

Curatorial Concepts of the 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 to a deeper appreciation the life of Masriadi and offers an exciting new dynamic to the presentation of his works.

Number of Artworks: More than 30 selected paintings

Range of Artworks: Early works from 1998 to his most recent 2008 works

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

Curators:

Seng Yu Jin graduated from the National University of Singapore with a Master of Arts in History. He is an 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).

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.

The 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

- 2002
 - 'Not Just Political' at H. Widayat Museum, Magelang
 - 'Terumba Karang' Exhibition
- 2000
 - 'Seni Rupa Campur' Exhibition at Beeldende Kunst (DBK), Dordrecht Netherland
- 1999
 - 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
 - An Exhibition at Rudana Museum, Ubud, Bali
 - An Exhibition at Imperial Hotel, Kuta, Bali
 - Sanggar Dewata Indonesia Exhibition at Bentend Vredeburg, Yogyakarta
- 1997
 - Kelompok 7 Exhibition – Sanggar Dewata Indonesian at Bentara Budaya, Yogyakarta
 - Dies Natalis Indonesian Art Institute Exhibition, Yogyakarta
- 1996
 - '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
 - 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
 - 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 amissed 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*.



Jangan Tanya Saya, Tanya Presiden (Don't Ask Me, Ask the President)

2007

150 x 200 cm

Acrylic on canvas

An assiduous reporter faces off a ferocious military general in *Jangan Tanya Saya, Tanya Presiden* (2007); a scene suffused with climactic drama. The forceful confrontation between the two of them is the foregrounded subject, typical of the artist's interest in developing visual narratives through incisive composition of scenes with heightened expression and passion.

Jangan Tanya Saya, Tanya Presiden is one of the finest examples of this pictorial interest. The two figures in the painting are highly developed caricatures. The figure of the general, indicated by the stars on his epaulette, is a highly eloquent study of anger. A figure squares up opposite him, presumably a reporter, his right hand gripped tightly onto a pencil, assiduously prepared for every single news-worthy word from the general. Each of the figures is scrupulously rendered. Their physiognomies are laboriously portrayed by the artist, from the character of skin down to the faithful reproduction of each pockmark.

The dispositions of the two figures are at odds with each other. The general's braying mouth exposes a set of well-built teeth, seemingly ready to chew away at the reporter's head. His gesticulation is clear; he wants himself absolved of any responsibility or burden of having to represent someone else. The reporter is a study of stodginess, from his immaculately set hair and moustache to his inexpressive tightly closed mouth.

The narrative and dynamics between the depicted figures in a painting of Masriadi's such as *Jangan Tanya Saya, Tanya Presiden* can oftentimes be extrapolated and apprehended as personal responses to particular social and political events in Indonesian history and current affairs. It is in transplanting Masriadi's pictorial narratives to the real world that sometimes sardonic, sometimes wry, and yet at other times tongue-in-cheek humour of the painter's social observations emerge most clearly.



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 began 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.

From 22 August • 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.

Oct 11 • 2.00pm – 4.00pm • Octo and Qoppa, 8Q sam • 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

Join a curatorial tour with Wang Zineng into Masriadi's painted world and learn of insights and stories about Masriadi's paintings.

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

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 is Singapore Art Museum's new wing for contemporary art. Both the main museum building and the new 8Q building were originally built as school. Creation and experience of contemporary art are highly individualistic and largely unconventional, yet the artworks have a broad community orientation by virtue of a shared forum as well as its concerns with contemporary life and living. This continuum and flow between the cutting-edge and the community creates a zone that lies outside the institutional bounds of school, but like school, it is a place of learning and enrichment. As a new wing, 8Q takes on a contemporary outlook that is differentiated from the museum's historical art programmes. 8Q's inaugural exhibition explores this very zone of school within and outside, and the museum's own trajectories of school to museum. Eight Singaporean artists work with eight museum curators, to realise the inaugural presentation of School: 8Q-rate. The works by Ahmad bin Abu Bakar, Chong Li-Chuan, Jahan Loh, Donna Ong, :Phunk Studio, Grace Tan, Tan Kai Syng and Jason Wee all make reference to school, whether as a personal or generic experience. In the case of Chong Li-Chuan, the site itself of 8Q was his former school -- Catholic High Primary School.