This painting entitled Ngaso, was created by Sudjojono based on the events that occurred not long after Indonesia proclaimed its independence; a period commonly known as the Indonesian National Revolution. In this painting, Sudjojono depicts freedom fighters resting or ngaso in a ruin amidst the battle against the Allied forces to defend Indonesia’s independence.

During that time, Sudjojono was traveling from Jakarta to Yogyakarta to attend the Youth Congress I. While on route, Sudjojono and his peers stopped at the headquarter of the Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia (Indonesian Youth Forces) in Cikampek, West Java.

At that time, Sudjojono documented the various events that occurred during the battle through his sketches, which he painted almost 20 years later. Other than Ngaso, Sudjojono also painted Pertemuan di Tjikampek jg Bersedarah (Historic Meeting in Tjikampek) (1964), which is part of Museum MACAN’s collection and Markas Laskar di Bekas Gudang Beras Tjikampek (Militia Headquarter in the Former Rice Granaries) (1964), a piece that is within the collection of Indonesia’s State Palace.

Born in 1913 and died in 1985, Sudjojono was one of the painters who pioneered the emergence of modern Indonesian painting in the 1940s. During that era, he was involved in numerous groups including the Seniman Indonesia Muda (Young Indonesian Artists), which was established as an effort to assist the government to defend the country’s independence.

Like many other Indonesian painters during the Revolution, Sudjojono was directly involved with the political movements and documented the events that occurred on the frontlines.

He was also known for the term he coined, “Jiwa Ketok” (Visible Soul), which deems that a painter’s work is a reflection of themselves and their identity.

To me, one of the interesting things about this painting is, instead of depicting battles with heroic actions or portraying national leaders for propaganda, Sudjojono painted eight unnamed fighters. Aside from illustrating the role of commoners fighting for independence, this painting also portrays a more humanistic side to the history of Indonesia’s struggle.
Map of Bali with the Rose of the Winds was made by Miguel Covarrubias after he visited Bali around 1930s.

Born in 1904 and died in 1957 in Mexico, Covarrubias worked as a cartographer in Mexico before moving to New York in 1923. There, he worked as an illustrator for major media houses such as Vanity Fair, New York Herald, and the New York Evening Post.

In 1930, Covarrubias married Rosa Rolanda, an artist, dancer and choreographer. The newlywed couple traveled to Japan, China, and the East Indies, from Sumatra to Java, until eventually arriving in Bali.

This map of Bali was made in an illustrative style based on Covarrubias’ artistic interpretation of the island when he visited with his wife.

He made this work with an ethnographical approach, a branch of social science that aims to collect data based on observations about the culture of particular society.

The work depicts geographical features such as mountains, rice fields, seas, temples, and a number of important locations in Bali including Buleleng, the colonial capital at the time, and other areas such as Denpasar, Gianyar, Tabanan, and Klungkung.

This work depicts Bali as an exotic tourist destination through stereotypes such as its natural beauty, flora and fauna, and activities of the locals that became a tourist spectacle, especially for Europeans.

This work also illustrates how the image of Bali that we know today was initially constructed by the Dutch colonial government and the European tourists in the early 20th century.

In 1937, Covarrubias published a book entitled “Island of Bali”, which contained writings and illustrations from his visit along with photographic documentations taken by his wife with this work featured as the cover. This book was well acclaimed in the United States and considered to have contributed to popularizing Bali as a tourist destination for Americans after the end of Second World War in 1945.

ASEAN +3 (2017)

Pasir berwarna, kotak plastik, selang plastik, dan semut
Colored sand, plastic box, plastic tube, and ants

128 x 310 cm

Koleksi milik / collection of Museum MACAN


ASEAN+3 terbuat dari 13 kotak akrilik yang diisi pasir berwarna yang disusun menjadi bendera-bendera negara anggota Association of Southeast Asian Nation (ASEAN) ditambah dengan tiga negara penting lainnya di Asia yaitu Jepang, Tiongkok, dan Korea Selatan. Masing-masing bendera terhubung dengan selang dan kemudian diisi dengan ribuan semut hidup. Dalam proses pembuatan karya ini, Museum MACAN juga bekerjasama dengan para ahli biologi dari Lembaga Ilmu Penelitian Indonesia (LIPI).

Dalam instalasi ini, terdapat proses konstruksi dan dekonstruksi terjadi secara terus menerus dalam sebuah lingkungan yang terkontrol. Seiring waktu, semut-semut tersebut berpindah dengan menggali terowongan yang menghubungkan bendera satu dengan lainnya dan turut memindahkan pasir dari bendera-bendera tersebut. Hal ini merupakan representasi dari pergerakan manusia yang terjadi antar negara.

Instalasi Yanagi menyinggung berbagai isu geopolitik, ekonomi, pertukaran budaya, dan migrasi penduduk yang terjadi di Asia akibat globalisasi. ASEAN sendiri didirikan tahun 1967 yang diprakarsai oleh Indonesia, Malaysia, Filipina, Singapura, dan Thailand. ASEAN bertujuan mempercepat pertumbuhan ekonomi, menjaga stabilitas regional, dan mendorong berbagai kolaborasi antar anggotanya pasca Perang Dunia II. Sejak itu, ASEAN bermekaran menjadi organisasi yang vital dalam kerangka geopolitik dan diplomasi global, terutama sejak krisis keuangan 1997 yang menyebabkan adanya pergeseran kekuatan dari Eropa dan Amerika menuju Asia.

Instalasi ini melihat kembali hubungan antar berbagai negara Asia Tenggara dan Asia Timur yang bukan hanya berkembang dari kedekatan geografis, tetapi juga dari persamaan sejarah kolonialisasi, budaya, dan hubungan perdagangan di masa lampau.


ASEAN+3 was commissioned to Yukinori Yanagi by Museum MACAN in 2017. Born in Japan in 1959, Yanagi grew up in a suburban neighborhood and often played with insects and became fascinated with their characteristics and behaviors. His childhood would later influence him in his artistic practice and inspired him to create an installation that utilizes the movement of live ants, a work that would bring him recognition in the global art scene.

ASEAN+3 was made from 13 acrylic boxes, filled with colored sand, arranged into the flags of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with an addition of three other important countries in Asia: Japan, China, and South Korea. Each flag is connected by a tube and later filled with thousands of live ants. In the process of creating this work, Museum MACAN worked together with biologists from the Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI).

In this installation, a process of construction and deconstruction occurs continuously in a controlled environment. As time passes, the ants move by digging tunnels that connects one flag to another, and transfers sand along the process. The movements of the ants act as a representation of the cross-national human movement.

Yanagi’s installation tackles several matters such as geopolitics, economics, cultural exchange, and migration that happens in Asia due to globalization. ASEAN itself was established in 1967, initiated by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. It aims to accelerate economic growth, maintaining regional stability, and encourage collaboration between its members after the Second World War. Since then, ASEAN has grown into a vital organization in the global geopolitical and diplomatic framework, especially after the financial crisis in 1997, which saw the shift of power from Europe and North America to Asia.

This installation examines the relationship between many nations in Southeast Asia and East Asia, which not only developed from geographical proximity, but also from its shared colonial history, culture, and trade history.

The ants become a metaphor of the relationship between humans, nations, and nature as well as opening up questions about the future. How does a nation place itself in the 21st century? Does the concept of a nation still relevant when humans, goods, and information have become highly connected? Yanagi invites us to rethink these concepts of nation and state.


Dalam lukisan ini Arahmaiani menggabungkan berbagai simbol dari berbagai sejarah Jawa, mulai dari ajaran animisme, Hindu, hingga Islam – yang menggambarkan proses perkembangan budaya di nusantara sejak ratusan tahun lalu hingga sekarang, dan memberikan penekanan pada nilai-nilai keberagaman yang terkandung di dalamnya.


Beberapa tahun setelahnya, Arahmaiani menjual lukisan tersebut dan sejak itu tidak pernah dipamerkan ke publik, hingga akhirnya pada 2017 berhasil dideteksi keberadaannya dan kemudian dikolesi oleh Museum MACAN.

Born in 1961, Indonesian artist Arahmaiani has been actively addressing issues surrounding socio-politics, gender, and the environment through her paintings, drawings, installations, and performances.

In this painting, Arahmaiani depicts a sacred Hindu symbol, the lingga-yoni, also the title of the work, which represents regeneration and the natural balance between the feminine and masculine energy. However, Arahmaiani deliberately placed the yoni, which would usually be placed on the bottom, to the top, to actuate gender equality.

Surrounding those symbols are text in two different languages. The top half of the painting, Arahmaiani wrote the text in Javanese letters, also known as Arab Pegon, which says ‘alam adalah buku’ (nature is a book), followed by the first 12 letters of the Arabic alphabet. On the bottom half of the painting, Arahmaiani wrote the first line of Jambu Epitaph in Javanese that tells the story of Purnawarman, the leader of the Hindu Kingdom in Java, Tarumanegara, in the 5th century. In this painting, Arahmaiani brought together various symbols from Javanese history, animism, Hinduism all the way to Islam – illustrating the cultural development in nusantara since centuries ago to the present day, emphasizing on the value of diversity within them.

This painting is one of Arahmaiani’s most significant work that marks her interest in the issue of culture, history, religion, and tolerance, which she has consistently addresses in her present works.

When this painting was first exhibited in Jakarta in her solo exhibition entitled ‘Sex, Coca-cola, and Religion’ at Rumah Seni Oncor, it stirred some controversy. Certain groups considered this painting as offensive towards their religion and thus the exhibition had close early.

A few years later, Arahmaiani sold the painting and the work has been hidden from the public eye ever since. In 2017, the whereabouts of this painting was identified and it was later acquired by Museum MACAN for their collection.

Arahmaiani (l./b. Indonesia, 1961)

Lingga–Yoni (1994)

Cat akrilik di atas kanvas
Acrylic on canvas
182 x 140 cm
Koleksi milik / collection of Museum MACAN

Ady Nugeraha,
Asisten Kurator, Curator’s Assistant