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Ambitious Alignments:
New Histories of Southeast Asian Art,
1945–1990

Edited by Stephen H Whiteman,
Sarena Abdullah, Yvonne Low
and Phoebe Scott

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Aesthetics of Silence: Exploring Trauma and Indonesian Paintings After 1965

Wulan Dirgantoro

In the aftermath of the 30 September Movement, which saw the assassination of six Indonesian military generals and one lieutenant, Indonesia experienced the bloodiest purge in its modern history. The exact death toll of these mass killings—which took place from 1965 to 1966, primarily on the islands of Java, Sumatra and Bali—is unknown, but scholars have estimated that at least half a million people lost their lives. The targeted individuals had associations, alleged or actual, with the Indonesian Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia, hereafter cited as PKI). Many of those accused were murdered, raped, tortured or imprisoned, often without trial, and the survivors were only gradually released more than a decade later, between 1977 and 1978. The 30 September Movement, which was attributed to internal army conflict between pro-Sukarno and anti-Sukarno groups of officers (with limited support from some PKI leadership) served to politically legitimise Suharto (1921–2008), who ascended to power as Indonesia's second president a year later,¹ marking the beginning of the country's New Order (Orde Baru) regime (1966–98).²

While scholars have researched and written extensively on the history, background and mechanics of the mass killings, it remains a sensitive topic for most Indonesians.³ The imprisonment and human rights abuses were suffered not only by those who were labelled as PKI, but also by their family members, who continued to be discriminated against well after the events. This essay will explore how this traumatic period impacted Indonesian modern art history from the perspective of those who witnessed it firsthand. It proposes a nuanced reading of Indonesian art history

between 1970 and 1990, not only as an era of increased artistic freedom, but also as one in which artists were profoundly affected by these traumatic circumstances. Despite a general depoliticisation of Indonesian art following the 1965–66 anti-communist killings, certain pieces by artists such as Srihadi Sudarsono (b. 1931) and A D Pirous (b. 1932) appear to engage with and represent historical trauma.

Before examining the impact of the mass killings and the challenges in reading artworks in the context of trauma, it is necessary to position this discussion in the current debate regarding the events of 1965–66. Numerous publications by foreign and more recently Indonesian writers, filmmakers and scholars on the subject have centred on testimonies of victims and survivors.⁴ Nonetheless, sociologist Ariel Heryanto argues that the representation of the subject, particularly on screen, is still fraught with ethical and moral imperatives.⁵ He observes that the massive scale of the violence and a continuing state terror campaign against the return of communism may disclose deep-rooted fears and raw wounds in the collective social memory, thus making it impossible and even undesirable to discuss the event, even through the language of 'logic and evidence'.⁶

Visual arts have long been acknowledged as a reflection and documentation of their respective eras of production, yet surprisingly there is a distinct lack of research in Indonesian modern art history on the subject, most notably the period right after the events of 1965–66. Some publications, issued in the mid-2000s, focus on the time before the mass killings; they are generally written from the perspective of the Left and demonstrate the gradual push to bring the 1965–66 events to light.⁷ Yet very few have discussed the aftermath of the mass purge with regard to trauma and image-making.

The decade immediately after the 1965–66 events has been labelled by leading Indonesian art critic and artist Jim Supangkat as one of 'depoliticised art', emphasising the fact that artists avoided an involvement with socio-political issues.⁸ While Indonesian artists have consistently engaged with socio-political themes since the inception of modern art there in the 1940s, it was in the years leading to the anti-communist killings of 1965–66 that they became more deeply immersed in politics.

There was considerable pressure by the New Order regime after 1965 to censor and control cultural production in order to silence its critics.⁹ Art historian John Clark has observed that most texts tend to focus on the radical new practices that emerged in the mid-1970s as a challenge to this period of conservatism.¹⁰ Furthermore, many of the Bandung-based artists discussed in this essay worked for the New Order regime, participating in various public art projects. Their careers progressed—arguably because their art suited the regime's need for a new source of cultural capital—such that they would themselves become part of Indonesia's art establishment. Supangkat noted that the avoidance of socio-political content in art

was not only limited to subject matter, but also extended generally to the production of art. This meant a high degree of self-censorship and voluntary mutism on the part of artists and the art establishment. Voluntary mutism was initially generated by personal fear, avoidance and possibly trauma, but soon it became a widespread defence mechanism and extended to the silencing of others.¹¹

Despite the self-censorship that appears to have left much of this history unwritten, this essay posits that most Indonesian artists' narratives and image-making still reflected the situation that emerged from the devastating 1965–66 era. The shock, fear and uncertainty that many Indonesians experienced just after the news of the mass killings certainly affected artists—of the five Bandung artists interviewed for this study, most were unable to remember much of the first five years after 1965. The curious blankness in their collective memory may be explained by the feelings latent in the artists' subconsciouses having formed an affective network that can be seen as a form of collective trauma. My emphasis on the Indonesian modern painters Srihadi Sudarsono and A D Pirous therefore aims to show the 'other' side of the 1965–66 events—that is, from the perspective of those who did not suffer persecutions during the anti-communist purge.

In the early 1970s to late 1980s the focus of Indonesian art history was on non-representational art, when modernism, especially abstraction, re-emerged as the dominant genre and was seen as representative of the New Order's ideology because of its perceived distance from socio-political themes. This starkly contrasted with the period from 1962 to 1965, when abstraction was seen as complicit with Western capitalist ideology and not aligned with the prevailing leftist political sentiment.¹² Both Sudarsono and Pirous are noted for their abstract, non-representational paintings of a style that reached its peak during the New Order regime. Moreover, their works at this time were, and are still, frequently viewed by Indonesian art historians as embodying the depoliticisation of Indonesian modern art.¹³ While the testimonies of the victims and survivors of the events are paramount in order to establish the truth and seek justice, I would like to argue that others who lived through this period also shared trauma. The re-examination of early pieces by Sudarsono and Pirous suggests how others could bear witness—either directly or indirectly—to trauma through the visual arts.

Who Owns Trauma?

Writing about trauma and the crisis of representation, literary theorist Cathy Caruth asserts that massive trauma precludes all representation because ordinary mechanisms of consciousness and memory are temporarily destroyed.¹⁴ In her

research on the Holocaust, literary critic Shoshana Felman further points out that because the event was uniquely terrible and unspeakable, it radically exceeds our capacity to understand and grasp it.¹⁵ Both studies by Caruth and Felman resonate with the widely shared assumption about the failure of linguistic representation in post-Holocaust, as well as post-Hiroshima and post-Vietnam, eras.

One of Caruth's key findings is that in order to understand the potential 'contagion of trauma'—that is, the traumatising of those who listen—one should consider the possibility of the *transmission* of trauma through the act of listening and hearing the testimony of survivors.¹⁶ Most importantly, this transmission of the unrepresentable then implicates those who were not there as participants and co-owners of the traumatic event.

It is only in the past decade that more Indonesians have slowly begun to question the New Order's narrative of the 1965–66 mass killings. The year 2015 was marked by its fiftieth-year commemoration and a number of exhibitions by Indonesian visual artists, both in Indonesia and overseas, addressed this difficult theme.¹⁷ These exhibitions constituted important steps in exposing the truth about this dark period, possibly paving the way for national healing. Nonetheless, many of the artists in these exhibitions chose to depict graphic scenes of violence and torture as a form of visual testimony from the standpoint of victims and survivors. These works arguably perpetuate trauma, since they are unable to go beyond the contagion of trauma and in turn lead to the traumatising of those who listen and see.

Other scholars, including Jacques Rancière and Griselda Pollock, have suggested several ways to navigate the problem surrounding the unrepresentability of trauma as posited by Caruth. Rancière proposes to investigate this unrepresentability through reading mimesis as a relationship between *poiesis* and *aesthesis*—in other words, a way of creating an economy of affect.¹⁸ He argues that 'sublime art' has the capacity to document the trace of the unthinkable.¹⁹ Here the discrepancy between a traumatic event and what one's mind can comprehend of that event, either in retrospect or retelling, can be bridged by a type of sublime art that transcends direct representation. Pollock makes a distinction between structural and historical trauma by establishing the ethical possibility of aesthetics to understand trauma.²⁰ For Pollock, historical trauma, which can overwhelm our capacity for understanding, can be traced back to extant structural trauma that is sealed within primal repression.²¹

I would put forward, therefore, that the abstract and non-figurative paintings produced during and in the aftermath of the mass killings may have the capacity to engage with Indonesia's historical trauma. Because of the challenges involved in discussing the 1965–66 mass killings—both on representational and political levels—it might be more instructive to read historical trauma in Indonesian art history as a 'matrixial borderspace', a notion proposed by the artist, philosopher and theorist

Bracha Ettinger.²² Ettinger, who expands upon Rancière's and Pollock's ideas, argues that aesthetic practices have the capability of resolving trauma, by acknowledging the traumatic weight that haunts our culture. The framework that Ettinger proposes is the matrixial model, which allows an interaction that involves artwork not as a site for a pre-created message, but as a screen/borderspace upon which past and present events are unconsciously shaped and projected.²³ These events can be personal, drawn from the artist's own perspective, as well as historical or external.

Sudarsono's and Pirous's early pieces have been labelled as 'lyrical abstraction' (*abstrak liris*), a genre defined by the Indonesian critic and writer Sanento Yuliman in 1976 as a filtering of external/internal experiences through the artist's own emotional stance.²⁴ The lyrical quality (*lirisisme*) sought by the artist is usually achieved by synthesising objects through the processes of visual abstraction. If we were to apply Ettinger's model of borderspace, this lyrical quality can be seen as a gateway to an affective network that links the viewer to a more symbolic, poetic inner world alongside the subjectivities of the artist and of the unknown other in Indonesian society.

Within this framing, the paintings by these two artists can be seen as a site where the viewer can encounter (and connect with) aspects of numerous subjects—past and present, known and unknown—within the affective network of lyrical abstraction. Although not every viewer is able to engage in this encounter (or even acknowledge it), the work invites us to make our own borders fragile enough to register the being, pain or joy of others, without attempting to master the experience of the work as an object or a communication.²⁵ What is often forgotten in the debates on the events of 1965–66 is that, while each side claims to 'own' trauma, they are all in fact victims of the extreme violence and the ongoing state terror campaign. Thus, while Sudarsono and Pirous did not participate in or directly witness the anti-communist killings, they were actively making work in the period before, during and after them.

If trauma is considered to have a perpetual presence, it might here be best understood through its distinct absence from visual representation during the period directly after 1965. The reading of aesthetics and silence/absence in the paintings of Sudarsono and Pirous examines how trauma, image and thought intersect.²⁶ Furthermore, their art during this era could be understood as a type of witnessing through image-making, one that has been overlooked in the writing of Indonesian modern art history. Given the constant binary of self/other, either/or, victim/perpetrator in the current discourse on the events of 1965–66 and in Indonesian modern art history, the following study explores the possibilities of sharing pain or trauma through the power of imagination and creativity by recognising the capacity of shared humanity, rather than policing the boundaries of difference.

The Bandung Art School and the Left-Right Cultural Debate

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The Faculty of Fine Arts and Design (Fakultas Seni Rupa dan Desain) at the Bandung Institute of Technology (Institut Teknologi Bandung, ITB, hereafter cited as the Bandung Art School) was established on 1 August 1947, initially as a training school for Indonesian art teachers.²⁷ During its formative years from 1948 to 1958 the school was largely staffed by Dutch teachers; one name that stands out from this period is Ries Mulder (1909–1973).

Mulder taught fine arts at the school from 1948 to 1958, and during his tenure there greatly influenced the institution's curriculum and shaped the school's aesthetic philosophy. In his own art practice Mulder was influenced by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and Georges Braque (1882–1963) before he eventually developed a personal style of geometric cubism characterised by a subtle use of colour. It is not surprising, therefore, that the direction of the art school and its aesthetic philosophy was initially moulded by Mulder's own background.²⁸ This included an interest in modernist principles, with formal elements such as form, shape and colour taking precedence over content.

In 1954 the artist Trisno Sumardjo (1916–1969) sharply criticised the paintings of Bandung Art School adherents as weak copies of their Dutch teachers and lacking the 'Indonesian-ness' required by the young republic. He further stated that the art academy was simply a laboratory of the West.²⁹ Although Sumardjo's writings chimed into the debate on the cultural identity of post-independence Indonesia, they also set the tone in constructing the identity of the art school as pro-Western, thereby drawing it into the larger cultural and political debate in the early to mid-1960s.

Despite Mulder's influence, the local context of modern Indonesian art defined production in certain ways: for example, narration, and to some extent figurative representation, still mattered. Both Sudarsono and Pirous stated that they were not particularly driven to create highly formalist pieces, and preferred those that would not only communicate with their audience but would also allow viewers to connect with their inner selves through an engagement with the work.³⁰ For example, Sudarsono stated that painting exists to tell stories to the viewer, while Pirous maintained that abstraction is a conversation that cannot be expressed.³¹ The statements by the two artists can be seen to affirm the desire to use form as medium to achieve affect in paintings through a lyrical quality.

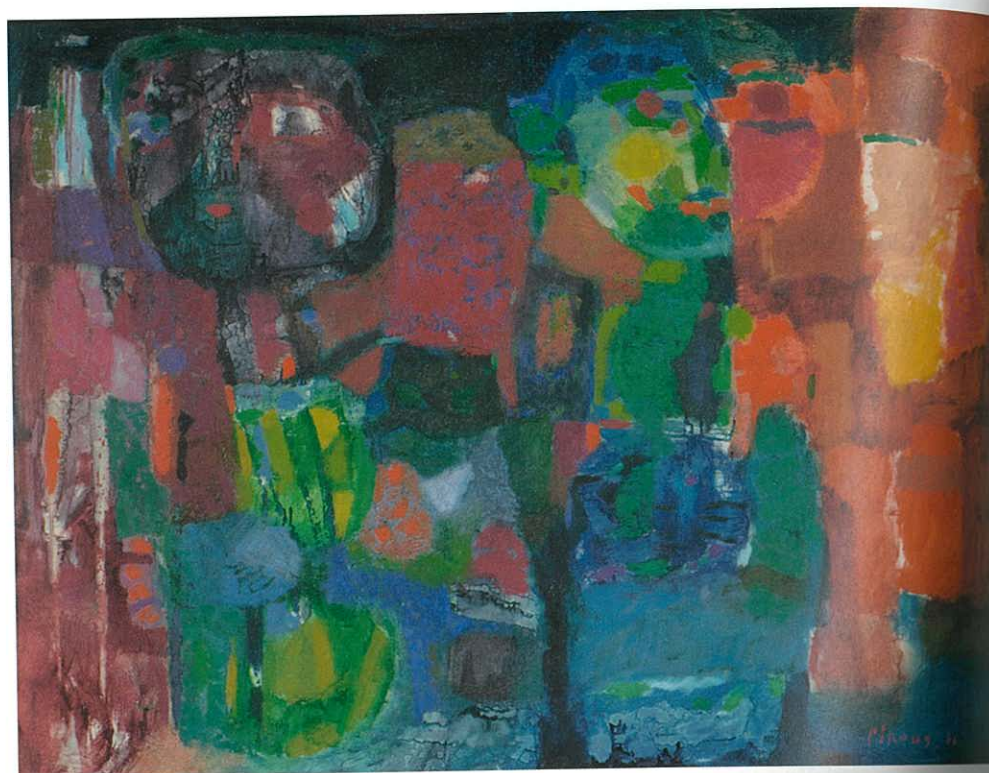
Between 1962 and 1965, Indonesia's foreign policy increasingly leaned toward the Left under Indonesia's first president, Sukarno (1901–1970), who openly encouraged the PKI. The change from a nationalist to anti-imperialist

rhetoric was supported by the growing Cold War climate in the region. At the same time, Indonesia's political and economic conditions were volatile, with inflation running at 600 per cent and living conditions worsening.³² As the largest non-ruling communist party in the world before 1965, the PKI had affiliations with many other organisations in Indonesia. For example, the People's Culture Organisation (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat, hereafter cited as LEKRA), the Indonesian Women's Movement (Gerakan Wanita Indonesia, or Gerwani) and The People's Youth (Pemuda Rakyat) were some of the groups that shared aspects of the PKI's ideology, even though not all their members belonged to the PKI.³³

The arts during this period were also sharply divided by the Left versus Right debate. Artists, writers and other intellectuals engaged in heated discussions on the role of the arts in Indonesian society. Those who argued for the alliance of art and politics were often members of LEKRA, who in turn strongly criticised others who did not participate in their ideology. Other more liberal humanist intellectuals adopted the stance that the arts should be separate from politics. Some of the more prominent artists who espoused this view were associated with the Bandung Art School.³⁴ The debate reached a climax on 17 August 1963 when a group of artists, writers and intellectuals published the *Cultural Manifesto* (*Manifes Kebudayaan*, abbreviated as *Manikebu*). The signatories of the manifesto believed that as individuals they should retain their freedom of expression, which would allow them to contribute more meaningfully to the nation, as well as permit them to contribute to universal liberal values.³⁵ (See also the essay by Brigitta Isabella in this volume.)

Pirous, at the time a junior staff member at the Bandung Art School, stated that most artists and staff members of the school supported the manifesto, be it overtly or in secret. For those artists affiliated with the school, the manifesto was a public statement of their (a)political views. Sudarsono did not sign the manifesto because he felt that politics could be divisive, while both Pirous and the painter Erna Garnasih (later his wife, Erna Garnasih Pirous, b. 1941) signed the manifesto because they held that art should not be aligned with any particular political party.³⁶

Interviews conducted for this study with Bandung-based artists, including the Pirouses, Sunaryo (b. 1943), and particularly Sudarsono, suggest that the years between 1962 and 1963 are remembered as 'an extremely tense period'.³⁷ The heated cultural discourse not only threatened the survival of the school but also impacted on art-making. Artists who chose not to pursue leftist politics were afraid to exhibit their works in public, and the art school was similarly hesitant to show pieces that were not in line with public sentiment. This pressure led to a change in the curriculum, with students now receiving instruction in painting in a social realist style; even the library acquisition policy changed to include more materials on Soviet aesthetics.³⁸



Sudarsono explained that he had been shocked to hear the rumour that if the leftists seized power he would be targeted for assassination because of his US education. He also recalled that he had heard that bodies would be dumped inside pre-dug burial pits ('holes', *lubang-lubang*) around his neighbourhood.³⁹ Similarly, Erna Garnasih Pirous, at that time still a student at the Bandung Art School, recollected accounts of *lubang-lubang* around her neighbourhood that reportedly were used by the communist party to bury political opponents.⁴⁰ Sudjoko (1928–2006), art critic and lecturer at the Bandung Art School, remarked that these rumours of killings were already circulating in 1964 at the height of the political rhetoric. He stated that the rumours were confirmed when the Indonesian military raided Cisitu, a neighbourhood where many ITB academics lived, after the assassinations of the generals on 30 September. In one of the raids, they allegedly discovered some documents stating that the leftists were planning to kill the so-called capitalist lecturers on 18–25 November 1965 at the Bandung Art School.⁴¹ Uncertainty on all sides around the potential for violence increased when many students and lecturers began to disappear. Sunaryo, then still a student at the Bandung Art School, remembers these and recalled that a female student who studied in the same studio did not return to school after the 30 September event, possibly because she was a member of LEKRA.⁴²

Fig. 1

A D Pirous, *Dua Bersaudara (Two brothers)*, 1966.

Oil on canvas, 95 × 124 cm.

Collection of Singapore Art Museum. Image courtesy of National Heritage Board Singapore.

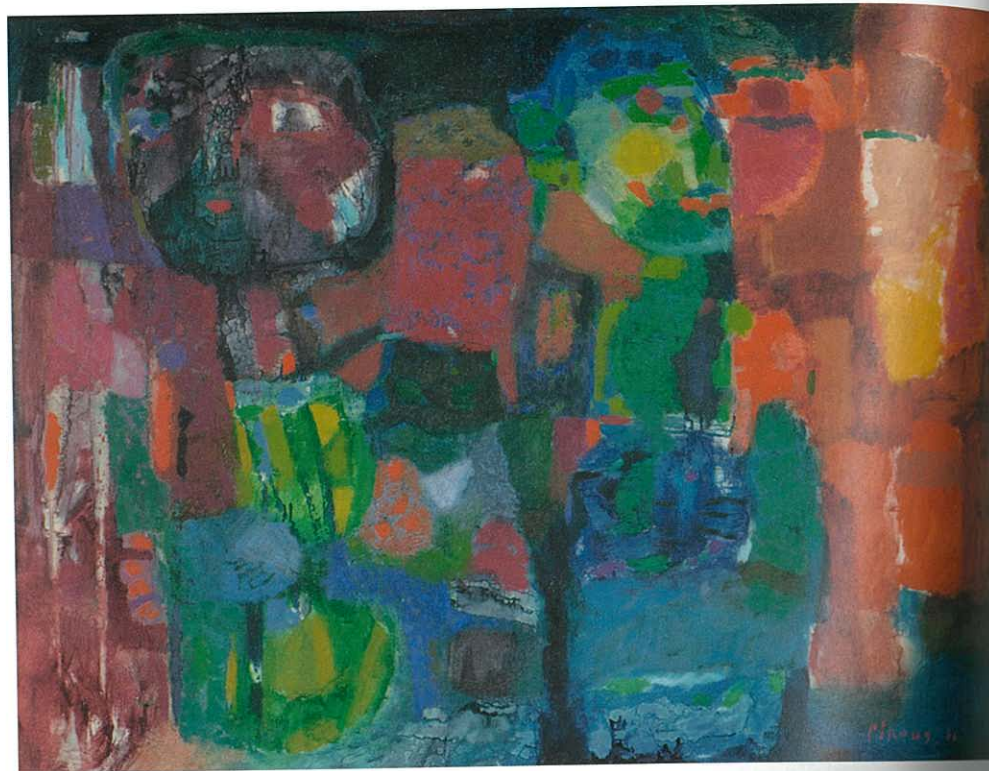
However, it must be emphasised that it was never clear to the artists interviewed for this study whether anecdotes, such as that of the *lubang-lubang*, occurred before or after the 30 September event. Researchers have argued that these rumours spread afterwards as part of a larger campaign to stir up anti-communist hatred.⁴³ Nevertheless, many Bandung artists have since expressed that they felt disbelief, then relief, when the news of 30 September broke—disbelief that any of their friends were communist sympathisers harbouring ill-intent towards them, and relief that they would once again be able to create and exhibit their works openly. The first group show by the Bandung artists, titled simply *Eleven Bandung Artists (11 Seniman Bandung)*, was held in 1966 at the Jakarta Cultural Pavilion (Balai Budaya Jakarta). Pirous states that with this exhibition Bandung artists were able to show their creative output and most importantly were 'free to be whoever they wanted'.⁴⁴ Yet could this freedom be read as an attempt to turn away from or suppress the traumatic memories of 1965–66? In consideration of the question, the following sections will examine traces of trauma as expressed in the paintings of A D Pirous and Srihadi Sudarsono in the 1970s.

Traces of the Past:

A D Pirous

Born in Meulaboh, Aceh, in 1932, Abdul Djalil (A D) Pirous studied at the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Bandung Art School. Initially he intended to become an art instructor but later changed his major to painting (he eventually taught art at the Bandung Art School from 1971 until his retirement in 2005). Pirous was still a student at the school during the peak of the cultural debate in 1963 and the events of 1965–66. Reflecting on the period after the 30 September events, Pirous commented that he mostly felt relief that the ideological pressures on the school had largely disappeared, and he too joined in the celebratory exhibitions, such as *Eleven Bandung Artists* and the follow-up exhibition, *Eighteen Bandung Artists* (1971).

Both in Indonesia and abroad, Pirous is principally known for his modern calligraphic paintings. The artist's paintings from 1965 to 1970 demonstrate a preoccupation with three different themes: children, everyday life and landscape. Works such as *Festive prince (Penganten Sunat, 1969)*, *Cyclists (Bersepeda, 1966)*, *Two brothers (Dua Bersaudara, 1965, fig. 1)* and *Rocky hills of Padalarang (Bukit Karang Padalarang, 1968)*, a landscape of the hills surrounding Bandung, showcase his range of subject matter. Sanento Yuliman noted that from 1970 Pirous turned away from direct representation and mostly utilised his printmaking skills (i.e. etching), the result being that his paintings became



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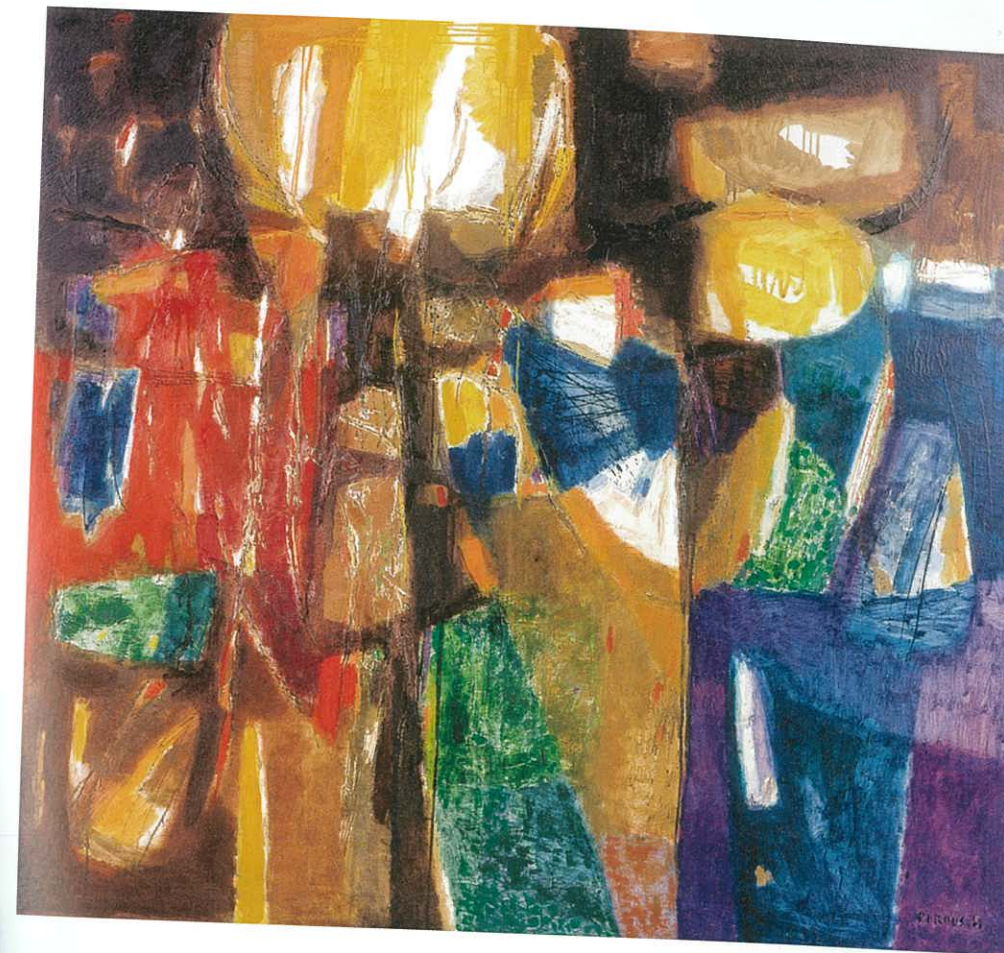
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more abstract and non-figurative.⁴⁵ But a close examination of Pirous's art reveals elements of repression that are an indirect consequence of the collective trauma of the 1965–66 events.

Despite its visual richness and seemingly apolitical subject matter, one painting by Pirous—*The Sun after September 1965* (*Mentari Setelah September 1965*), 1968, fig. 2)—specifically mentions the 1965–66 events. The art historian Astri Wright and anthropologist Kenneth M George cite this as one of the first works made during the New Order regime that referred to the 30 September 1965 events.⁴⁶ Wright interprets the hunched, abstracted figures in the painting, who seem to turn away from the large looming disc above them, as the artist's critique of the New Order regime, with the sun symbolising the regime's destructive force. By contrast, George sees the painting as an expression of the artist's joy and optimism in the early years of New Order.⁴⁷ He further argues that no sense of a haunting by the dead appears in the work, only a sense of relief and 'deliverance' for the artist and many of his peers pressured by the political situation before the 1965–66 events.⁴⁸

I would agree with George that while this sense of haunting may not surface in Pirous's paintings between 1965 and 1970, it can be read in a few of the artist's later works—namely, pieces from the early 1970s. Both Yuliman and George note that in these examples the artist returned to the past, reflecting on the concept of antiquity.⁴⁹ Moreover, Yuliman believes that Pirous referenced his Acehese roots through the incorporation of Arabic-looking scripts in his 1970–85 pieces (the artist would have been exposed to Arabic throughout his childhood in the predominantly Muslim region of Aceh).⁵⁰ Pirous himself singles out two paintings, *Epitaph II* (1972) and *Grey wall* (*Dinding Kelabu*, 1975) as two early paintings that combined the forms, spiritual expression and memory from his early life.⁵¹

Epitaph IV (1972, fig. 3), in particular, offers a reading of haunting. In it, a tombstone-shaped object is set against a dark-blue background; the central panel has three rows that are inscribed with what appears to be Arabic script. This script is part of the artist's reimagining of the objects of his past, and therefore not actually Arabic. The flatness of the deep-blue background contrasts sharply with the nervous energy of the grey-yellow tombstone-like form. The artist has 'scratched' the bottom register; this recalls his earlier interest in the technique of etching and further adds to the work's restless energy. The artist has also included a bright-red horizontal line along the top that draws the eyes and is reminiscent of an open wound—a visceral sign of trauma. Another piece, *White writing* (*Tulisan Putih*, 1972, collection of Museum of Fine Arts and Ceramics, Jakarta), also utilises traces of writing. The white texts, again pseudo-Arabic script, are arranged in a similar manner to *Epitaph IV* and here too Pirous has 'etched' the surface. The rough grey surface overlays a red-brown background, resembling ancient paper placed on parched earth. The juxtaposition of



traces of cultural memory (the Arabic-like script), the images of a tombstone and the red earth might lead to an interpretation of these paintings as representations of, or memorials to, an unknown event or to a situation of loss.

While most critics single out Pirous's paintings of the 1970s as referencing the artist's Acehese and Muslim roots, I would like to offer a different possibility for this painting—that this and other paintings permitted the viewer to interact with historical trauma. Pirous may have consciously tried to disengage from socio-political issues in his early works by focusing on abstraction in an effort to construct an Indonesian identity, yet he experienced and witnessed one of the most intensely disturbing events in Indonesia's history. In contrast to the pieces that he produced immediately after the 1965–66 events, which hint at a process of voluntary mutism in their avoidance of direct representation, Pirous's work from the 1970s included a series that did not remark on recent events, but rather those of a more distant past.

Fig. 2
A D Pirous, *Mentari Setelah September 1965* (*The Sun after September 1965*), 1968.
Oil on canvas, 135 × 150 cm.
Collection of Serambi Pirous. Image courtesy of National Gallery Singapore.



Fig. 3

Pirous, *Epitaph IV*, 1972.

Oil on canvas, 165 × 155 cm.

Collection of Serambi Pirous. Image courtesy of National Heritage Board.

By reaching further back, Pirous's paintings are perhaps mirroring recent trauma with an earlier trauma—namely, the loss of identity due to the impact of colonialism on Acehnese culture, the impact of which continues to be felt to the present day. The allusion to trauma of a more remote past suggests a refracted representation of the violence of the 1965 events. According to the artist, traces, elements, remnants and the encounter with the archaic are his strategies of 'writing'.⁵² In his paintings, the act of writing goes beyond the literal inscription on a page and becomes a more abstract means by which to pass on stories. At the same time the paintings can be viewed as an embodied perception of a sensory experience. The artist's reworking of the materiality of his painting—namely, the physical act of 'scratching'—combined with his use of remnants, elements and temporal displacement might also solicit unease from the viewer.

The transmission of affect in Pirous's paintings relies on the willing participation by the audience to 'connect' with these abstract paintings at the moment when placed on public view. For example, the pseudo-Arabic scripts corresponded with the rising confidence in Islamic spiritual and religious matters as endorsed by the state. Thus, many Indonesian Muslims would have related to the inner, poetic world of Islamic spirituality through Pirous's paintings, rather than to the trauma of 1965–66. And yet, when the viewer's focus shifts to the work's historical context, the painting sets in motion an insight into the largely unacknowledged and repressed history of violence in Indonesia, instead of what it directly signifies. Arguably, the paintings can also be seen as a conduit of negative affect at a time when all forms of division were labelled as damaging to the state's ideology of social harmony and the organic unity between state and society.⁵³

The subtle encounter that Pirous was hoping to achieve in these works allowed some viewers to connect with diffracted memories of loss and absence that were part of the Indonesian collective memory but not entirely communicated by the artist and others. While recent traumatic events may have made their way into these artworks, the artist's act of 'writing' in the paintings was one of inscribed meanings and multiple temporalities rather than transcribed events. It is therefore a strategy that evokes something deeper within the human psyche than might be achieved by the written historical record.

Srihadi Sudarsono and the Aesthetics of Silence

The affective network exploring loss and absence during this period is more redolent in the art of Srihadi Sudarsono than in that of Pirous. In an artistic career spanning different epochs of Indonesian history, from the revolutionary years (1946–48), to the

New Order (1967–88) and the Reform (Reformasi) era of 1998 onwards, Sudarsono has become a respected figure in Indonesian modern art.

Born in 1931 in Surakarta, Central Java, Sudarsono trained as an artist under Sindudharsono Sudjojono (1913–1986), one of the founding fathers of Indonesian modern art. He joined the Bandung Art School in 1952 and also credits his teacher there, Ries Mulder, as having influenced his art. In 1960 Sudarsono received a two-year scholarship to study for a Master's degree at Ohio State University. He described his time in the United States as one full of explorations: he was introduced to various American artists such as Roy Lichtenstein (1923–1997) and exposed to the latest artistic developments.⁵⁴ However, Sudarsono recalled during the interview that even though he was exposed to modernism during his US studies, he was unable to change his artistic direction, since he still felt the strong pull of the narrative. His final project at Ohio State University in 1962 focused on the overarching theme of the suffering of man.⁵⁵

One of the paintings produced during this final project was *The hungry people* (*Orang-orang Lapar*, 1962), in which the artist has placed three dark figures against a rich blue and black background. The figures dominate the canvas with their looming presence, their small heads and extended necks serving to draw attention to their bulky torsos. Similarly, in *Three figures* (1962, fig. 4) the artist has scratched the surface of the canvas, especially the heads, necks and bodies as if to imbue them with a skeleton-like feel. He stated that the suffering of his people was never far from his mind, even though he was physically away from Indonesia in that period.⁵⁶ Sudarsono continued to produce works utilising this after his return from the United States in 1962. Paintings such as *Hungry men I* (*Manusia Lapar I*, 1967) and *Hungry men II* (*Manusia Lapar II*, 1967, fig. 5) represented the artist's lingering concern regarding social issues during this era.

Although Sudarsono was already painting in a figurative style in 1962, works from five years later exhibit a different treatment of the human torso. In these later pieces, the forms are crowded together, the brushstrokes more expressive and the background colours brighter. In *Hungry men I*, for example, the composition is still fairly representational; the figures are clearly huddled together, with smaller forms occupying the foreground in an intimate group, perhaps a family. The contrast of the dark figures against the yellow background, combined with the compact image, emphasises the artist's formal concern with the subject matter. However, in *Hungry men II*, the figures are more abstracted and almost fill the entire canvas. Like *Hungry men I*, there are also smaller figures in the foreground. Sudarsono depicts one with shorter lines scratched on the upper torso, evocative of rib bones. He has also added three oblong shapes in the centre of the three figures, similar to the oedema-like swellings he used in his 1962 works, quite possibly as a visceral representation of hunger.



A small figure at the centre of the painting is noteworthy because of the criss-cross pattern on the upper torso and the inclusion of negative space above it. The negative space, painted using red and dark brown, towers above and threatens to consume the figure. It also echoes the oblong shapes on the figures—visible in *Hungry men I*, as well—that are repeated several times in the composition. These shapes might be read as symbols of absence and as an index of witnessing the historical trauma of 1965–66, a form of recognition of the unrepresentable nature of trauma. This work can also be interpreted in relation to the account above about the pits ('holes', *lubang-lubang*) and the prevalence of a feeling of emptiness/loss (*kehilangan*) that some Bandung-based artists mentioned in their recollections of the period. Considering this common experience, one may perceive that the traumatic wounds

Fig. 4
Srihadi Sudarsono, *Three figures*, 1962.
Oil on canvas, 131 × 130 cm.

Collection of National Gallery Singapore. Image courtesy of National Heritage Board.

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Fig. 5
Srihadi Sudarsono, *Manusia Lapar II (Hungry Men II)*, 1967.
Oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cm.
Private collection.

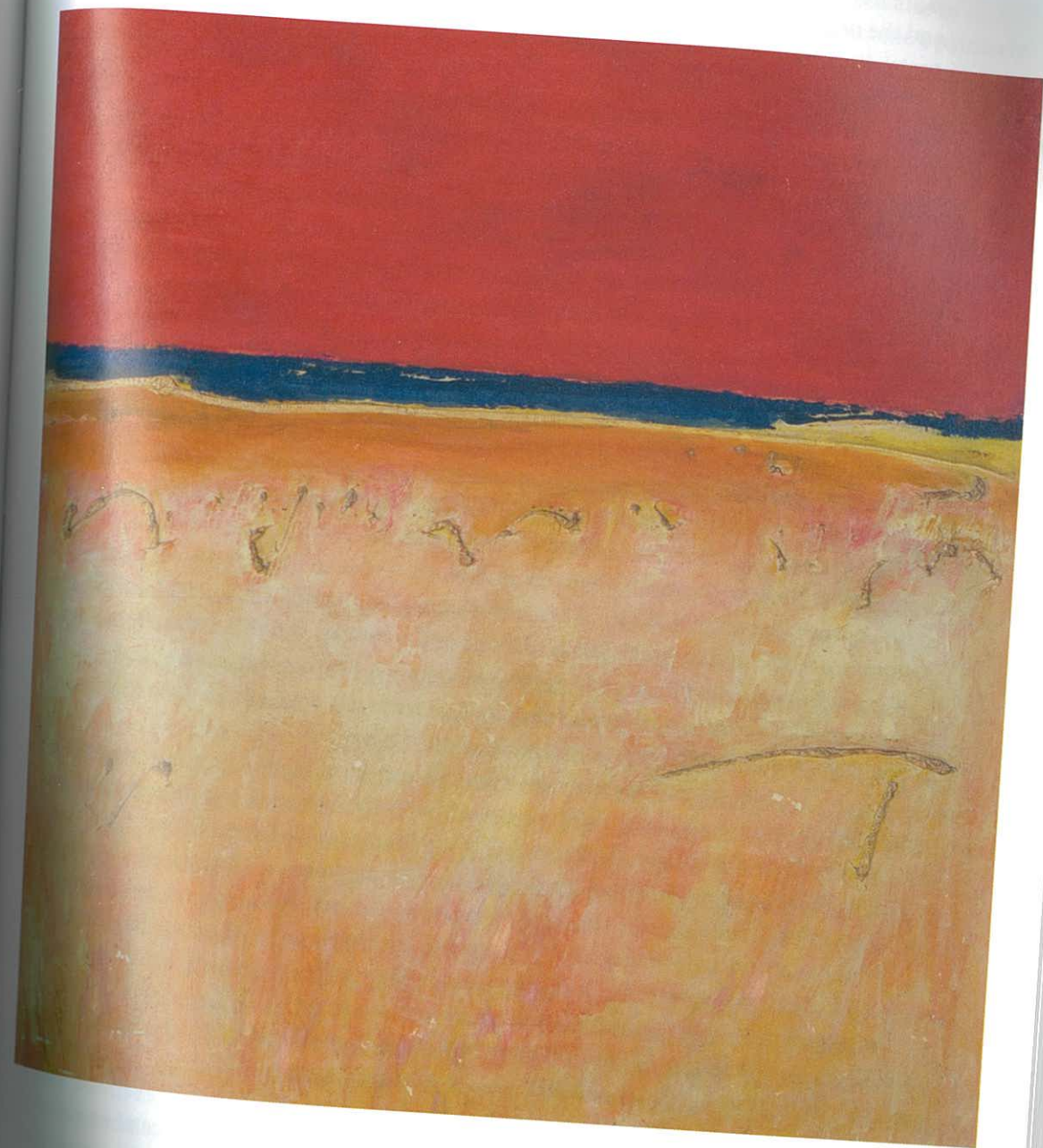


Fig. 6
Srihadi Sudarsono, *Horison (Horizon)*, 1971.
Oil on canvas, 100 x 100 cm.
Collection of Jakarta Art Council. Image courtesy of Jakarta Art Council.

inflicted on the individuals combine to create a sort of collective group culture that is greater than its individual parts. In this light, the depiction of the oblong shapes and the negative space in Sudarsono's paintings can be understood as an index to the social dimension of trauma.

Despite Sudarsono's mastery of abstract form, a skill he gained from his formalist training, the artist asserts that storytelling and *rasa* (aesthetic sensibility) remain at the core of his art practice.⁵⁷ While the paintings mentioned above can be read as illustrations of the artist's ongoing commitment to narrate Indonesia's socio-political issues, they also partake in the act of bearing witness. Abstraction has been viewed as a watershed for modernism in Southeast Asia, representing a negotiated aesthetic of translocal cultures,⁵⁸ but it is also possible to speculate that, as part of this negotiation, abstraction in Indonesia during the 1970s and 1980s engaged with an affective network that included trauma.

Beach (Pantai, 1972, collection of Dewan Kesenian, Jakarta) showcases Sudarsono's lyrical treatment of the subject of landscape and seascape. Parallel sections of orange, white and deep blue complement a curved white section on the right that intimates the contours of a bay. The intense sky is conveyed through the artist's highly sensitive tonal rendition of the blue and black shades. Similarly, *Horizon (Horison, 1971, fig. 6)* is divided into sections, with the earth and sea at the bottom and the sky at the top; the mostly blurred dark line in between hints at the permeability of the border (here, the horizon). Sudarsono has added lines of thick, irregularly shaped impasto to the middle and bottom sections of the canvas, and this calls to mind either dynamically moving objects or a textual inscription. The combination of the areas' opacity with the smoothly applied impasto conveys not only a sensorial experience but also invites an affective response from the viewer.

While we may see a hint of a structure or a boat, perhaps even recognise a particular landscape in the painting, Sudarsono's *Horizon* abandons direct tangible representation to focus on the sublime. The sublime, as discussed by Rancière, can be characterised by a sense of the powerlessness of imagination when faced with certain spectacles.⁵⁹ The viewer is removed from the field of art, entering into an affective relationship with the materiality of the work. In other words, Sudarsono's paintings can be seen as the entry point through which the viewers encounter aspects of many themes, be they past or present, known or unknown.

The quality of the sublime, as visualised in the works of Sudarsono, Pirous and other lyrical abstract painters, may also be read as a form of voluntary mutism and repression that emerged out of the silencing under the New Order regime. This type of silence, according to Shoshana Felman, is 'not a simple absence of an act of speech, but a positive avoidance—an erasure—of one's hearing, the positive assertion of a deafness, in the refusal not merely to know but to acknowledge ... what is being

heard or witnessed'.⁶⁰ This is even supported by Sudarsono's comment in an interview in 1972 that he could not afford to speak openly about his messages because to convey meaning through speech was too dangerous.⁶¹ As such, Sudarsono's painterly treatment in *Horizon* can be understood as another way for him to narrate stories by appealing to the senses.

Sudarsono's *Horizon* series and Pirous's 1972 paintings can be seen to embody the gap between the seen and the unseen during the period after the 1965–66 events. In the silence (and silencing) during the New Order regime, the premise of social realist art to 'make things visible' necessitated a readjustment, whereby the visible became invisible. Yet in the discussion of the field of visibility in Indonesian modern art there is also an entire area that was at play and unrepresented—namely, the issue of historical trauma. The lack of direct representation of violence was, of course, driven by pragmatic concerns in order to circumvent any trouble with the authorities. For the artists, the act of bearing witness was not through brutally direct compositions illustrating piles of corpses, but rather through the use of colour or references to the past. In other words, their focus was on the materiality of painting as a form of diversion from the complex and perhaps impossible task of representation.

Conclusion

To return to Bracha Ettinger's concept of a matrix, the turn towards the aesthetic in the period of early New Order Indonesia (1970s) can be understood as a way to explore art's capacity to create encounters between the artist and the viewer (the artist and the other) by activating unconscious psychic threads. Moreover, paintings from the period become sites for the merging together of subjectivities that share the pain of the unknown other. For scholars such as Ettinger and Griselda Pollock this is the ethical responsibility of aesthetics: that it has the capacity to humanise us by implicating those who were not there, as participants and co-owners of the traumatic event through the matrixial borderspace.

The current discussion on trauma centring on the 1965–66 mass purges in Indonesia has shifted beyond the individual experience, in that it is trans-generational and also transnational. Victims, survivors and family members have begun to open up, seeking avenues to speak about their experiences and meeting with different kinds of reception. Yet none of these processes is easy. The four decades of silencing and repressed memory under the New Order regime have contributed to an environment in which, as Ariel Heryanto suggests, it has not been possible to work through the events in order for healing to occur. In addition, the

current government's perpetuation of a spectre of communism reiterates the trauma of the past, not only for the victims and survivors but also for those who want to challenge the state version of the events of 1965–66.⁶²

The English word 'trauma' cannot be directly translated into Indonesian and so is often vaguely understood by Indonesians as a personalised mental state. In fact, the term emerged in the context of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition first widely understood in Indonesia in the mid-2000s following media coverage of natural disasters, ethno-religious violence and terrorist attacks in Java, Maluku and Bali, respectively. However, while it may not generally be discussed as a collective state, trauma cannot be separated from the larger socio-cultural and local context in Indonesia that enables the sufferer to tell his or her story to an appropriate and receptive audience beyond a clinical setting.⁶³

The ethical possibility of reading aesthetics together with a social dimension of trauma might be one way to question and elaborate on the current reading of Indonesian modern art history. The continuous labelling by both Indonesian and foreign scholars of a 'depoliticised period' of art for the years 1970–80 offers a convenient platform from which to perpetuate a binary structure of modern art history in Indonesia that focuses on the either/or, the self/other. Yet, as this essay has attempted to demonstrate, these artworks also provide an alternative reading that includes different subjectivities, temporalities and encounters, one that seeks to read art-making as an expression of compassion.

Notes

- 1 See John Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder: The September 30th Movement and Suharto's Coup d'Etat in Indonesia*, New Perspectives in Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 2006, and Kate McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia 1965–68*, NUS Press, Singapore, 2012.
- 2 The term Orde Baru (New Order) was coined by Indonesia's second president, Suharto, in 1966 to distinguish his government from the previous one, which he labelled Orde Lama (Old Order) in 1978. Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, did not use the term 'Old Order' during his terms; instead he named every year differently, such as Tahun Kemenangan (The Year of Victory) in 1962, and Tahun Vivere Pericoloso (The Year of Living Dangerously) in 1964, as part of his public campaign. See Adrian Vickers, 'From Old to New Orders', in *A History of Modern Indonesia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 146.
- 3 See Robert Cribb (ed.), *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966: Studies from Java and Bali*, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, Monash University, Melbourne, 1990; Roosa, *Pretext for Mass Murder*; McGregor, *The Contours of Mass Violence in Indonesia 1965–68*; Vanessa Hearman, 'Dismantling the "Fortress": East Java and the Transition to Suharto's New Order Regime (1965–68)', PhD, University of Melbourne, 2012.
- 4 See, for example, the documentary *40 Years of Silence: An Indonesian Tragedy* (Robert Lemelson, Elemental Productions, 2009); Leila S Chudori's novel *Pulang* (going home, Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, Jakarta, 2012); Laksmi Pamuntjak's novel *Amba: Sebuah Novel* (Amba: a novel, PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, Jakarta, 2015); and most notably *The Act of Killing* (Joshua Oppenheimer, Christine Cynn and unnamed Indonesian, Final Cut For Real DK, 2012) and *The Look of Silence* (Joshua Oppenheimer, Final Cut for Real DK, 2014).
- 5 Ariel Heryanto, 'The Impossibility of History?', in *Identity and Pleasure: The Politics of Indonesian Culture*, Kyoto CSEAS Series on Asian Studies 13, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, NUS Press, Singapore, 2014, pp. 108–9.
- 6 *ibid.* Joshua Oppenheimer's films have generated an intense discussion on this topic. See, for example, Robert Cribb, 'An Act of Manipulation?', *Inside Indonesia*, 20 April 2013. <http://www.insideindonesia.org/review-an-act-of-manipulation> (viewed 3 May 2017) and 'The Act of Killing: A CAS Roundtable', *Critical Asian Studies*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2014, 145–146.
- 7 See Antariksa, *Tuan Tanah Kawin Muda: Hubungan Seni Rupa—Lekra 1950–1965*, Yayasan Seni Cemeti, Yogyakarta, 2005; Rhoma Dwi Aria Yuliantri and Muhidin M Dahlan, *Lekra Tak Membakar Buku: Suara Senyap Lembar Kebudayaan Harian Rakyat*, Penerbit Merakesumba, Yogyakarta, 2009; Mia Bustam's memoirs *Sudjojono dan Aku*, Pustaka Utan Kayu, Jakarta, 2004; and *Dari Kamp ke Kamp: Cerita Seorang Perempuan*, Kerjasama Spasi, VHR Book dan Institut Arus Studi Informasi, Jakarta, 2008.
- 8 Jim Supangkat, 'Contemporary Art, Development Beyond the 1970s', in *Indonesian Modern Art and Beyond*, The Indonesian Fine Arts Foundation, 1997, p. 71. The term depoliticised (*depolitisasi*) was first used in his curatorial essay at the 9th Jakarta Biennial (1993).
- 9 Brita L Miklouho-Maklai, *Exposing Society's Wounds: Some Aspects of Indonesian Contemporary Art* since 1966, Flinders University Asian Studies Monograph, no. 5, Flinders University, Adelaide, 1991, and Susan Ingham, 'Powerlines: Alternative Art and Infrastructure in Indonesia in the 1990s', PhD, University of New South Wales, 2007.
- 10 John Clark, *Modern Asian Art*, Craftsman House, Sydney, 1998, pp. 283–4.
- 11 See Jim Supangkat (ed.), *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia: Kumpulan Karangan*, PT Gramedia, Jakarta, 1979; Apinan Poshyananda, 'Con Art' Seen from the Edge: The Meaning of Conceptual Art in South and Southeast Asia', in Luis Camnitzer, Jane Farver, Rachel Weiss and László Beke (eds), *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin 1950s–1980s*, exhibition catalogue, Queens Museum of Art, New York, 1999, pp. 143–8; and Paul Khoo, 'Beyond Souvenirs: The Legacy of the Indonesian Avant-Garde in the Global', in Charles Merewether (ed.), *Glossary*, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, Singapore, 2011.
- 12 See Claire Holt, 'Indonesia Revisited', in *Indonesia*, no. 9, Cornell University Press, 1970, pp. 163–75, 177–88; Brita L Miklouho-Maklai, 'Indonesian Art Before 1966', in *Exposing Society's Wounds*, pp. 4–44; Trisno Sumardjo, 'Bandung Mengabdi Pada Laboratorium Barat', in Aminudin T H Siregar and Enin Supriyanto (eds), *Seni Rupa Modern Indonesia: Esai-esai Pilihan*, Penerbit Nalar, Jakarta, 2006, pp. 113–6.
- 13 See, for example, Kusnadi and Nyoman Tusan, *Seni Rupa Indonesia dan Pembinaannya*, Penerbitan Proyek Pembinaan Kesenian Departemen P dan K, Jakarta, 1978; Sanento Yuliman, 'Seni Lukis Indonesia Baru', originally published in 1976, in Jim Supangkat and Asikin Hasan (eds), *Dua Seni Rupa: Sepilihan Tulisan Sanento Yuliman*, Penerbit Kalam, Jakarta, 2001; Jim Supangkat and Asikin Hasan (eds),

- Dua Seni Rupa: Sepilihan Tulisan Sanento Yuliman*, Yayasan Kalam, Jakarta, 2001, pp. 78–104; and Holt, 'Indonesia Revisited', pp. 163–75, 177–88.
- 14 Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 1995, pp. 4–5.
- 15 Shoshana Felman, 'Education and Crisis, Or The Vicissitudes of Teaching', in Caruth, (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 12.
- 16 Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, p. 10.
- 17 For example *KUP*, Lawangwangi Art Space, 21–29 May 2015, Bandung; *Belok Kiri Jalan Terus*, Ark Galerie, 7 June–10 July 2015, Yogyakarta; and *ORDE BARU OK. Video—Indonesia Media Arts Festival 2015*, 15–28 June 2015, Jakarta. See also 1965, solo exhibition by Dadang Christanto, QUT Museum, Brisbane, 19 November 2015–28 February 2016.
- 18 Jacques Rancière, 'Are Some Things Unrepresentable?', in *The Future of the Image*, Verso, New York, 2009, p. 112.
- 19 *ibid.*, p. 111.
- 20 Pollock explains structural traumas as the formation of subjectivity according to psychoanalytic tradition, including birth, castration and the loss of loved ones, that are buried deep in the subconscious (*Urverdraengung*), while historical traumas are overwhelming events that we may experience during the course of our lives as a result of war, abuse, torture, accident, political terror and so forth. See Griselda Pollock, 'Art/Trauma/Representation', *Parallax*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2009, p. 41.
- 21 *ibid.*, pp. 44–5.
- 22 Bracha Ettinger, 'Wit(h)nessing Trauma and the Matrixial Gaze: From Phantasm to Trauma, from Phallic Structure to Matrixial Sphere', *Parallax*, vol. 7, no. 4, 2001, pp. 99–100.
- 23 *ibid.*
- 24 Yuliman, 'Seni Lukis Indonesia Baru', pp. 100–1. Yuliman appears to have adapted the term from the American lyrical abstraction school in the 1970s. Yet Mamannoor argues that the history of abstraction in Indonesian modern art possibly has several origins, rather than solely originating from the Bandung Art School. See Mamannoor, 'Hendak Dibawa ke Mana Perjalanan Seni Lukis Abstrak Indonesia?', in S M Sukarman (ed.), *Seni Abstrak Indonesia*, Yayasan Seni Visual Indonesia, Jakarta, 2009, pp. 19–20.
- 25 Ettinger, 'Wit(h)nessing Trauma', p. 94.
- 26 Yuliman, 'Seni Lukis Indonesia Baru', p. 100. See also M Agus Burhan, 'Sudjojono's View of Realism and the History of Modern Indonesian Art', in *Strategies Towards the Real: S Sudjojono and Contemporary Indonesian Art*, exhibition catalogue, NUS Museum, Singapore, 2008, p. 26.
- 27 The name Mazhab Bandung (Bandung (Art) School) was initially used as a pejorative term by the art critic Trisno Sumardjo in his 1954 essay, in which he criticised the art academy's leaning towards Western modernism. The term was later popularised by Helena Spanjaard to differentiate the ideological contrast between Bandung and Yogyakarta art academies. See Helena Spanjaard, 'The Controversy Between the Academies of Bandung and Yogyakarta', in John Clark (ed.), *Modernity in Asian Art*, Peony Press, Sydney, 1993, pp. 85–104.
- 28 Helena Spanjaard, 'Ries Mulder and the Development of Modern Art in Bandung', in Meta Knol, Remco Raben and Kitty Zijlmans (eds), *Beyond the Dutch: Indonesia, the Netherlands and the Visual Arts from 1900 Until Now*, exhibition catalogue, KIT Publishers, Amsterdam, 2009, p. 107.
- 29 For discussions on the Yogyakarta and Bandung art schools, see Claire Holt, 'The Great Debate', in *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1967, pp. 211–54; Spanjaard, 'The Controversy Between the Academies of Bandung and Yogyakarta'; and Jim Supangkat, *Modern Indonesian Art and Beyond*, The Indonesian Fine Arts Foundation, Jakarta, 1997.
- 30 Jean Couteau offers this explanation of Sudarsono's *roso*: 'the *roso* intuition, which aided by the meditative process, seeks to abolish the distance between the self and the object of contemplation and to seek mystical union between self and the God.' See Jean Couteau, 'Srihadi Sudarsono: Facets of an Indonesian Maestro', *The Jakarta Post*, 19 July 2012, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/07/19/srihadi-soedarsono-facets-indonesian-maestro.html> (viewed 6 December 2015).
- 31 Interviews with Srihadi Sudarsono, 21 June 2015, and A D Pirous, 9 August 2015 (both in Bandung).
- 32 See Adrian Vickers, 'From Old to New Orders', pp. 151–2.
- 33 The ASRI (Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia, Indonesian Art Academy) based in Yogyakarta was the Bandung Art School's main rival and was dominated by LEKRA artists before the 1965–66 events. See Holt, 'The Great Debate', 1964, pp. 215–32.
- 34 Interview with A D Pirous, Bandung, 20 June 2015.
- 35 The signatories of the manifesto on 17 August 1963 were H B Jassin, Trisno Sumardjo, Wiratmo Sukito, Zaini, Bokor Hutasaht, Gunawan Mohamad, Bur Rasuanto, Soe Hok Djim, D S Muljanto, Ras Siregar, Djufri Tanissan, A Bastari Asnin. For historical background and in-depth discussion on the manifesto and its counterpart, LEKRA, see Keith Fouchier, 'A Survey of Events Surrounding Manikebu. The Struggle for Cultural and Intellectual Freedom in Indonesian Literature', *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en Volkenkunde/Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, vol. 125, no. 4, 1969, pp. 429–65. See also D S Muljanto and Taufik Ismail, 'Manifes Kebudayaan', in *Prahara Budaya: Kilas Balik Ofensif LEKRA/PKI DKK*, Penerbit Mizan, Bandung, 1995, pp. 160–72.
- 36 Interviews with Srihadi Sudarsono, 21 June 2015, and with A D and Erna Garnasih Pirous, 20 June 2015 (all in Bandung).
- 37 Interviews with A D Pirous, 20 June 2015 and 9 August 2015; with Erna Garnasih Pirous, 20 June 2015; with Srihadi Sudarsono, 21 June 2015 and 11 August 2015; and with Sunaryo, 10 August 2015 (all in Bandung).
- 38 Sudjoko, *Menuju Nir-Ada*, paper published for *Pameran/Temu Budaya Paris-Jakarta*, French Cultural Centre, Jakarta, December 1992, republished as a chapter in Sudjoko, *Pengantar Seni Rupa*, Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, Jakarta, 2001, pp. 137–69.
- 39 Interview with Erna Garnasih Pirous, Bandung, 21 June 2015.
- 40 *ibid.* See Vanessa Hearman, 'Dismantling the "Fortress"', and Cribb (ed.), *The Indonesian Killings 1965–1966*. See also Sudjoko, *Menuju Nir-Ada*, pp. 23–4.
- 41 Sudjoko, *Menuju Nir-Ada*, p. 24.
- 42 Interview with Srihadi Sudarsono, Bandung, 10 August 2015.
- 43 Interview with Srihadi Sudarsono, Bandung, 20 June 2015.
- 44 *ibid.*
- 45 Sanento Yuliman, 'Citra dan Cita Karya AD Pirous 1960–1985', exhibition catalogue, *AD Pirous, Pameran Retrospektif 1960–1985*, Galeri Decenta, Bandung, 1985, pp. 31–99.
- 46 *ibid.*, p. 52.
- 47 Kenneth M George, 'Some Things That Have Happened to the Sun after September 1965: Politics and the Interpretation of an Indonesian Painting', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 39, no. 4, 1997, p. 625.
- 48 *ibid.*
- 49 *ibid.* See also Yuliman, 'Citra dan Cita Karya AD Pirous', pp. 65–71.
- 50 *ibid.*, p. 52.
- 51 *ibid.*, p. 66.
- 52 Interview with A D Pirous, Bandung, 20 June 2015. The artist's statement on 'writing' can be considered as going beyond the literal transcription on a page. For Pirous the importance of writing in his works is not only to transmit stories but also to capture the stories for the current generation.
- 53 Edward Aspinall, 'Suharto's New Order' in *Opposing Suharto: Compromise, Resistance and Change in Indonesia*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2005, p. 23.
- 54 Interview with A D Pirous, Bandung, 21 June 2015.
- 55 *ibid.*
- 56 *ibid.*
- 57 Interview with Srihadi Sudarsono, Bandung, 21 June 2015.
- 58 Patrick D Flores, 'Reworlding Modernity: Abstract Art in Southeast Asia in the 1950s and 1960s', in *Visions and Enchantment: Southeast Asian Paintings*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, in association with Singapore Art Museum and Christie's International Pte Ltd (Singapore), p. 34.
- 59 Rancière, 'Are Some Things Unrepresentable?', p. 112.
- 60 Shoshana Felman, 'Camus' *The Fall*, or the Betrayal of the Witness', in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (eds), *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, Routledge, London and New York, 1992, p. 183. For discussion on the multiplicity of silences, see Paul Connerton, *The Spirit of Mourning: History, Memory and the Body*, Routledge, London and New York, 2011.
- 61 *Saya tidak berpolitik. Dan tidak bisa menggambarkan dengan kata-kata, apa arti lukisan saya ini. Terlalu berbahaya bagi saya kalau mengeluarkan keterangan melalui isi lukisan. Silahkan artikan sendiri dari lukisannya.* See 'Senilukis Indonesia: Ada dan Tiadanya', *Ekspres*, 17 March 1972, p. 21.
- 62 Since 2015 there has been an increase in raids and censorship of cultural events that allegedly 'promote communism' in Indonesia. See, for example, Nancy Groves, 'Ubud Writers Festival Debates Massacre "That We're Not Supposed to Talk About"', *The Guardian*, 3 November 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/nov/03/ubud-writers-festival-debates-massacre-that-were-not-supposed-to-talk-about> (viewed 16 June 2016); 'Ketegangan Meliputi Pesta Sastra Asean, ALF 2016', http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/majalah/2016/05/160506_majalah_alf_2016 (viewed 16 June 2016); and Ging Ginanjar, 'Mengapa ada kecurigaan dan ketakutan akan bangkitnya PKI?', http://www.bbc.com/indonesia/berita_indonesia/2016/05/160510_indonesia_histeria_anti_komunis.shtml (viewed 16 June 2016).
- 63 Like the term in English, 'trauma' in Indonesian is defined as a psychic illness arising from a devastating event or physical harm. However, scholars have argued for a localised approach in understanding trauma in Indonesia. For a discussion regarding trauma as discourse in Indonesia, see Leslie Dwyer and Degung Santikarma, 'Posttraumatic Politics: Violence, Memory and Biomedical Discourse in Bali', in Laurence J Kirmayer, Robert Lemelson and Mark Barad (eds), *Understanding Trauma: Integrating*

- Biological, Clinical, and Cultural Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 406–7; and Nils Bubandt, 'When Trauma Came to Halmahera—Global Governance, Emotion Work, and the Reinvention of Spirits in North Maluku', in Thomas Stodulka and Birgitt Röttger-Rösler (eds), *Feelings at the Margins: Dealing with Violence, Stigma and Isolation in Indonesia*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt and New York, pp. 81–99. Jeane A Indrajaja and Manfred Zaumseil maintain that for the Javanese trauma is connected with feelings of *jinjau* (uncanny, dreadful) and *kethento-thento* (recurring vague shadows or ideas); these definitions certainly place fear and intrusive memories as central features. See Jeane A Indrajaja and Manfred Zaumseil, 'Suffering, Healing and the Discourse of Trauma', in Manfred Zaumseil, Silke Schwarz, Mechthild von Vacano, Gavin Brent Sullivan and Johana E Prawitasari (eds), *Cultural Psychology of Coping with Disasters: The Case of an Earthquake in Java, Indonesia*, Springer, New York, 2014, pp. 267–83.
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Embodied Subjectivities:

Accounts of Affect in Lani Maestro's Site-Specific Work, 1970s–1990s

Eileen Legaspi-Ramirez

This essay is an exercise in broadening art history's remit to make room for affective accounts and proceeds from Susan Best's assertion that art's affective dimension has been waylaid in art history as scholars pursue a cold tone to approximate credibility. In her book *Visualizing Feeling: Affect and the Feminine Avant-Garde* (2011), Best describes this devaluing of affect in relation to how visceral responses are still alarmingly seen as a descent into unbridled subjectivity and thus exceeding the parameters of the field.¹ To put it plainly, the research here, like Best's before it, casts its lot in an art history that tends not just to the mind, but to the gut. A secondary supposition is that affective accounts are more likely to surface with regard to installations than to other art forms, given their generally immersive nature. In this light, this essay focuses on selected installations by the Filipino-Canadian artist Lani Maestro (b. 1957), whose practice has been associated with particular streams of minimalist and conceptual work that may be read in the context of Best's reckoning with an art history that retreats from emotion and subjectivity to privilege cognition and aesthetic distance.²

While Best accesses psychologist Silvan Tomkins' long-respected proposition of the nine basic affects—such as surprise/startle, fear/terror and disgust, among others—and their physical implications, this study correlates these with Brian Massumi's assertion of affect's potency, describing as he did the felt state as a demonstration of how 'the skin is faster than the word'.³ Massumi further proffers affect as intense feeling that is arguably pre-lingual and beyond adequate