

SOEKARNO's FAVORITE PAINTERS

Mikke Susanto



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SOEKARNO's FAVORITE PAINTERS
PELUKIS-PELUKIS (KESAYANGAN) BUNG KARNO

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DEDICATED TO
PRESIDENT SUKARNO



*Dullah, Portrait of President Sukarno, 120 x 90 cm, oil on canvas, 1962.
From the Collection of the Presidential Palace of the Republic of Indonesia*

Foreword from the Publisher



Sukarno's name has entered the world history and has been heard from east to west, far beyond the area of the country he leads. He was well known in the United States of America, in the then Soviet Union, France, United Kingdom, Egypt, China and Tunisia. Asia-Africa Conference and Conference of the New Emerging Forces (CONEFO) were among his most significant initiatives. Sukarno is a much respected figure in history.

One of the interesting aspects of Sukarno's life, aside from his political activities, is his interest in fine arts. This book is about Sukarno and his relation with the art world. It could be said that without Sukarno the Indonesian fine arts would not be as it is now, in the sense that many master painters and sculptors would not be what they are without Sukarno.

This book opens a door onto history which has been tightly closed until recently. Indeed, some books have been written about the figure of Sukarno and his favorite painters who were also active in politics, and now they are complemented by this book by Mikke Susanto. We hope that this will be an inspiration for all of us, readers.

Our first president who loves paintings would surely not like it that many of the artworks and artistic vision would be lost. We hope that the figure of Sukarno will encourage us all to keep the nation great.

Jakarta, 23 November 2015

Ir. Benny Oenardi Raharjo, MBA
President Director of PT Dwi Samapersada
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Foreword

CHAIRMAN OF CREATIVE ECONOMY AGENCY

I sincerely welcome the idea of publishing the book “SOEKARNO’s FAVORITE PAINTERS” (*Pelukis-Pelukis kesayangan Presiden Sukarno*) written by Mr. Mikke Susanto, MA. In Indonesia there is a need of having more writings and books on creative works as a way of giving a continuous attention to and appreciation of many artworks and creative undertakings. These writings and books will be an important part of (public) education in order to form a creative economic environment which is not only the task of the Creative Economy Agency (BEKRAF), but also of all stakeholders of creative economy.

The field of writing and painting art are indeed two different areas. On the one hand, authorship requires skills to come up with systematic write up and which is a result of a reflection and imagination that should be based on the balance between taste and reason. The author is also expected to have a capacity to express his reviews and observations to serve as a bridge to the painting, the painter, the collector and the public so as to facilitate the appreciation (of the artworks)

On the other hand, painting art is a field that has its own rules. A painter needs an ability to make his works beyond measure regardless of their composition. The world of paintings is mostly ruled by the imagination, although there are also works that are rationalistic. A painter is expected to express contemporary and traditional issues, personal as well as public themes and with the use of various technique, to create a world of its own. Thus, behind the painting art millions of ideas could lie hidden. For this reason the painting art needs authors who serve as a bridge that facilitates its appreciation. It is the task of the authors to examine and review deeply the essence of paintings and the circumstances that surround them.

I think that this book of Mr. Mikke Susanto is of a great importance. We learn about the art in the life of President Sukarno and about hundreds of paintings by 40 renowned painters who are his favorites. I therefore, deeply appreciate the publication of this book entitled SOEKARNO’s FAVORITE PAINTERS that is presented in an attractive way. I hope that there will be more writings and books which could serve as a bridge between the artworks and the society at large.

In the next few years I am convinced that the creative economy in Indonesia will give a significant contribution to the nation. Within these developments, we need many skillful and profound authors who can facilitate the understanding of the dynamics of the creation of paintings in particular and visual art in general, as one of the sectors of our creative economy.

My congratulations and gratitude for the publication of this book.



Triawan Munaf
CHAIRMAN OF CREATIVE ECONOMY AGENCY

SAMBUTAN

KEPALA BADAN EKONOMI KREATIF

Dunia kepenulisan dan seni rupa merupakan dua kutub yang berbeda. Di satu sisi, misalnya kepenulisan, memerlukan keterampilan membuat teks (tulisan) yang bersifat terstruktur, diolah melalui pemikiran dan imajinasi yang mengandalkan keseimbangan rasa dan rasio yang seimbang. Penulis dituntut mampu menerjemahkan sesuatu yang dikajinya, agar menjadi jembatan antara benda (dalam hal ini lukisan) atau kreator (dalam hal ini peseni), maupun apresiator (dalam hal ini kolektor) dan masyarakat. Tentu saja maksudnya agar sesuatu tersebut mudah dipahami.

Sedangkan dunia seni rupa merupakan kutub yang menyimpan haluan tersendiri. Seni rupa, atau lebih khusus perupa, memerlukan keterampilan membuat teks (visual) yang bersifat tak terukur, bisa terstruktur maupun tidak. Seni rupa banyak dikendalikan oleh imajinasi, meskipun ada pula lukisan yang sifat rasional. Perupa dituntut menerjemahkan isu-isu kontekstual maupun tradisi, tema-tema pribadi maupun publik, dan berbagai improvisasi teknis, sehingga dapat menciptakan dunia tersendiri. Hal ini menyebabkan dunia seni rupa memiliki jutaan makna yang tersembunyi.

Untuk itulah dunia seni rupa memerlukan jembatan seorang penulis agar mudah diapresiasi. Tugas penulis dalam konteks seni rupa, salah satunya tentu meneliti dan menelaah secara mendalam terhadap hal-hal yang penting dalam karya seni dan berbagai hal yang melingkupinya. Buku yang ditulis oleh Mikke Susanto ini saya anggap memiliki kedalaman dalam berbagai hal. Misalnya dalam buku ini kita dapat membaca kisah-kisah yang terkait dengan biografi seni Presiden Sukarno, dan sejumlah ratusan karya lukisan yang dihasilkan dari 40 pelukis kenamaan, yang pernah berhubungan dengan presiden pertama Republik Indonesia tersebut.

Tentu saja saya menyambut baik gagasan penulisan seni rupa seperti buku ini. Di Indonesia, masih banyak karya seni dan usaha kreatif yang memerlukan penanganan dan apresiasi secara berkesinambungan. Dalam hal ini Badan Ekonomi Kreatif (BEKRAF) amat terbantu bila ada penulis-penulis yang turut membuat teks (tertulis) terhadap segala hal yang kreatif tersebut. Ibarat sebuah candi, karya seni memerlukan prasasti. Bukannya, sesuatu yang dianggap bersejarah, karena ada tulisan yang menyertainya?

Untuk itulah saya mengapresiasi kehadiran buku bertajuk Pelukis-Pelukis Kesayangan Presiden Sukarno yang dikemas secara menarik ini. Saya berharap setelah buku ini lahir, makin banyak lagi tulisan maupun buku-buku lainnya yang mampu memberi jembatan antara karya dan masyarakat. Dalam beberapa tahun ke depan, industri kreatif di Indonesia saya yakin akan mampu memberi sumbangan yang signifikan bagi bangsa. Di tengah-tengah perkembangan tersebut, kita memerlukan banyak penulis yang kuat dan mendalam guna memudahkan masyarakat memahami apa yang ada di sekitar kita.

Selamat dan terimakasih atas terbitnya buku ini.

Triawan Munaf

Sukarno's Favourite Painters

Pelukis-pelukis (Kesayangan) Bung Karno

Mikke Susanto

Indonesian art history books mention them only now and then, and sometimes merely as a footnote or as data to complete historical records. In reality they deserve more recognition as their works do not only decorate the walls of collectors' houses but have tremendous value for the history of the nation. And now they deserve even greater appreciation as they are the favourite painters of President Sukarno.

The Indonesian fine arts history is now gaining new momentum again not because of new data or discoveries, but because there are new interpretations on the role and the dynamic of painters of the past. Researchers today have discovered important facts where the role and the dynamic of those painters become a point of reference for the new generation of artists.

The role of patrons or supporters of fine arts should not –and should never- be forgotten. Fine arts without patrons are like a river that has burst its bank, flowing wildly and endlessly. And fine arts without supporters will be carried by currents and trends without direction. Collecting artworks without knowing their history would be like building a temple without a belief.

And, how could art lovers be sure of the value of their collection?

Buku-buku sejarah seni rupa Indonesia menyebut mereka hanya sesekali saja. Terkadang hanya menempel pada catatan kaki atau sebagai pelengkap data sejarah semata. Kenyataannya, mereka begitu berharga. Mereka tidak saja menghias dinding rumah para kolektor, tetapi juga berharga bagi sejarah bangsa. Kini, semakin tampak berharga, karena ia ternyata para pelukis kesayangan Presiden Sukarno.

Sejarah seni rupa Indonesia kini bergairah kembali. Bukan karena banyaknya data yang ditemukan, tetapi lebih karena munculnya berbagai interpretasi baru mengenai peran dan dinamika para pelukis di masa lalu. Banyak kisah yang baru saja dikuak oleh para peneliti masa kini, lalu menjadi realitas penting, dimana peran dan dinamika ini nantinya menjadi referensi hidup para perupa generasi selanjutnya.

Tak lupa--harus selalu diingat--adalah peran para patron atau pendukungnya. Seni rupa tanpa patron ibarat air tanpa gelas. Lepas begitu saja, serasa hidup liar di belantara yang tak berkesudahan. Belum lagi, jika melupakan peran para pendukungnya, kita akan tergeser oleh aroma dan niatan yang tak berhaluan: mengoleksi karya tanpa kisah. Ibarat candi tanpa prasasti.

Apakah Anda--para penyinta lukisan--yakin atas koleksi yang Anda beli berharga?

Review after review, opinion after opinion. Only if they could be explained constructively they would eventually bring a new interesting meaning (logos), and would therefore make the work concerned more valuable. For sure, an artwork is not contemplated and acquired only because of its size. Neither is it for its merely beautiful harmonious lines and color. It is not bought just because someone likes it and it is to his taste, is it? How one can measure beauty by lines and colors that are neatly arranged, whereas in other paintings, colors and lines splattered here and there can fetch a high price in the world class auction?

It is important to consider that the value of a painting is often connected to its creative process and its history, the history after its creation and the history of its acquisition. How then could one determine the value of an artwork?

The value of a painting does not depend only on the taste of the collector, but it is also determined by a number of important things. Concretely, to appreciate or to value an artwork means to give it its nominal price. And the pricing of art is the process to estimate the potential value of an artwork in relation to its financial gain rather than the aesthetic appreciation which is subjective.

The art price is then fixed by gathering and comparing data from various sources, such as auction houses, private and corporate collectors, curators, art traders, gallery owners, experienced consultants and specialized market analysts so as to arrive at certain price. An internet site presents an interesting approach worth further study. There are several approaches in determining the price of the painting: simple approach, accounting approach, approach to capital (the market), mathematical approach, collectors' approach, the approach of creativity and instinctive approach.¹

¹ Cf. Marion Boddy-Evans, "7 Ways to Price a Painting (Depending on Your Personality): Different approaches to putting a price on your art", <http://painting.about.com/od/careerdevelopment/tp/ways-price-painting.htm>, downloaded October 2014, at 09.13 WIB.

Keyakinan demi keyakinan atau mitos demi mitos atas karya tersebut, jika dijelaskan dengan konstruktif akan menjadi realitas (logos) baru yang menarik. Hal ini juga menjadikan lukisan Anda makin berharga. Koleksi-koleksi tersebut tidak ditimbang dan dibeli karena ukurannya, kan? Bukan pula karena sekadar garis dan warnanya yang harmonis dan indah semata? Juga bukan semata-mata karena Anda suka, bukan? Bagaimana mengukur keindahan hanya dengan garis dan warna yang tertata rapi, padahal pada lukisan lainnya, warna dan garisnya belepotan di sana-sini juga berharga tinggi di lelang kelas dunia?

Jadi ingatlah selalu, lukisan berharga juga sering dikaitkan dengan apa yang terjadi di balik proses kreatif pelukis maupun sejarahnya, baik sejarah pasca-produksi maupun sejarah akuisisinya. Lalu bagaimana mempertimbangkan karya bisa menjadi begitu berharga?

Berharganya sebuah lukisan tidak saja dipertimbangkan oleh sekadar rasa suka sang kolektor, tetapi juga ditandai dengan sejumlah khasanah. Pada aspek yang lebih khusus, mengapresiasi atau menghargai berarti sampai pada upaya untuk memberi angka nominal. Penetapan harga (pricing of art) adalah proses mengestimasi nilai potensial karya seni dan dengan demikian lebih merupakan kajian yang terkait dengan keuangan daripada sekadar apresiasi estetika dalam pandangan subjektif.

Penetapan harga seni melibatkan dan membandingkan sejumlah data dari berbagai sumber seperti rumah lelang seni, kolektor pribadi dan korporasi, kurator, kegiatan perdagangan seni, pemilik galeri, konsultan yang berpengalaman, dan analisis pasar khusus untuk sampai pada nilai. Sebagaimana yang dikemukakan dalam sebuah situs internet yang menarik untuk dikaji lebih lanjut. Di dalamnya terdapat beberapa pendekatan dalam menentukan harga lukisan. Pendekatan tersebut antara lain pendekatan sederhana, pendekatan akuntan, pendekatan kapital (pasar), pendekatan matematis, pendekatan kolektor, pendekatan kreativitas, dan pendekatan instingtif.¹

¹ Marion Boddy-Evans, "7 Ways to Price a Painting (Depending on Your Personality): Different approaches to putting a price on your art", dikutip dari <http://painting.about.com/od/careerdevelopment/tp/ways-price-painting.htm> diunduh pada 5 Oktober 2014, pukul 09.13 WIB.

Hence, the question of valuing and determining nominal price of artworks implies correlations of things that are rather complex. Even though common sense also dictates and does play a role in how to appreciate art, for example in art transactions, nevertheless to this day there is no concrete and definitive formula for it.

However, there is no reason to be concerned as the main issue is not about how much the value of the painting collection will be in the future (when one wants to sell it), but to what extent one can trust the (art) market. To follow the market (for example at auction or gallery) one will either be excited or discouraged. And if one chooses not to follow the market, one needs to think hard and find a solution elsewhere in order to be able to still sell at a high price.

This book is an attempt to give a greater appreciation of paintings by Indonesian artists by tracing the history after their creation and their acquisition. To what extent the story and the creative signs of the painters and their works can be traced? How much support did the patrons give to the development and the life of the artists? What happened during the life time of the patrons? And what happened in the history of Indonesian fine arts in the 20 years between the fight for independence till the time of the change of presidents? These are questions that will lead to the knowledge of the atmosphere wherein the story of the favourite painters of President Sukarno unfolds.

All these questions are used to give structures to the stories on the creativity of the artists as well as the historical aspects that have been deeply buried, mainly because of lack of research, about the role of the first President of the Republic of Indonesia in fine arts. The relation of Bung Karno (as President Sukarno is familiarly called and known) with fine arts was a factor that consolidated the status of artworks, in determining their place in history as well as in making them have an increased value in the market.

Dengan asumsi di atas, maka persoalan penghargaan dan penetapan nominal seni mengarah pada beberapa korelasi antar hal yang bersifat kompleks. Meskipun ada dan telah terjadi praktik akal sehat untuk menghargai seni, misalnya transaksi seni, namun demikian sampai hari ini tidak ada rumus konkret dan definitif mengenai urusan ini.

Jangan khawatir, pokok persoalannya bukan pada berapa harga lukisan koleksi Anda di masa depan (ketika ingin Anda jual), tetapi sejauh manakah Anda percaya para pasar? Jika mengikuti pasar (misalnya di balai lelang atau galeri) kemungkinan Anda akan tercengang, bisa pula ciut nyali. Jika tidak mengikutinya, Anda perlu memutar otak untuk mencari solusi di ruang lain, tetapi tetap berhasil menjual dengan nilai tinggi.

Buku ini adalah sebuah upaya untuk memberi penghargaan lebih tinggi pada lukisan-lukisan karya perupa Indonesia melalui pelacakan sejarah pasca produksi dan sejarah akuisisinya. Sampai sejauh mana kisah dan tanda-tanda kreatif yang terjadi pada para pelukis dan karya-karyanya? Seberapa besar dukungan sang patron terhadap perkembangan dan perjalanan hidup para pelukisnya? Apa yang telah terjadi di masa sang patron seni rupa hidup? Dan sejauh mana sejarah seni rupa selama 20-an tahun antara masa revolusi kemerdekaan hingga masa pergantian presiden terjadi? Itu semua adalah sejumlah pertanyaan yang akan menjadi awal untuk mengetahui atmosfer di balik kisah para pelukis kesayangan Bung Karno.

Semua pertanyaan ini adalah upaya untuk menguatkan kisah-kisah, baik pada dimensi kreativitas pelukisnya maupun menguak kisah sejarah yang selama ini masih terkubur dalam-dalam, terutama karena minimnya penelitian mengenai peran presiden pertama Republik Indonesia di ranah seni rupa. Bung Karno dan seni rupa adalah peluang untuk semakin menguatkan posisi karya seni rupa, baik pada persoalan penetapan posisi karya dalam wacana sejarah maupun hanya sekadar ingin mencoba berusaha agar karya-karya mereka menjadi semakin berharga di pasar.