

A GLIMPSE INTO THE STORY OF *Teguh Ritma Iman*

By : *Namira P. Imansa*

Translated by : *Sherrene Chua and Kanya Abe*



There is no doubt about the existence of Indonesia's wealth in arts and culture, especially on the Island of the Gods. We have the big picture. The sheer diversity of the arts and culture in Indonesia is enough to fill a whole book. Even so, my writing doesn't aim to merely describe the diversity of our beloved country, but to ask questions that we rarely ask ourselves: Can we also be part of the rich diversity surrounding us? Maybe I, you, and those around you are part of the fragments that make up that diversity.

For me, it's because we are always invited to see something that is beautiful but has no value or even valuable and something that is bad to something that is sad. Then, who has ever shown us the uncertainty of a thing? Which is still abstract for a handful of fragments. In fact, isn't uncertainty a process? And the process is the most beautiful, valuable, and precious thing? How can we leave that behind?

From the big picture of art and culture that we have, I am left wanting to be taken into one of those fragments in order to see the realities of art and culture and even social history that may be different in each one. Departing optimistically despite the uncertainty of opinions that must be locked up. I took the artist as the key to opening my cage. In this way, several points will emerge from the artist's fragment which I will describe here. In the future, this article can be of benefit to the artists I will write about as well as new information for the Balinese people.

Aristotle argued centuries ago that there were five paths that humans could take to find happiness in life, namely religion, philosophy, art, science, and pain. Being an artist is one of the professions for those who seek their life's happiness through art. I will review the journey of Teguh Ritma Iman, an artist. Teguh Ritma Iman, who is more commonly called Iman, is an artist from Denpasar, Bali. Iman, born on June 19, 1970, is the youngest of 3 children. It was by coincidence that God brought me into the world as his first gift after his marriage to Ririen Setyarini. Yes, I am the older sister of Iman's second child. Iman as a father never compared me to my siblings or neighbour's children. He is a person who is able to see that each person has their own perspective and characteristics. One of the ideal parents, right?

Teguh Ritma Iman defines an artist as a person who carries out an activity in relation to what they see, record, feel, and experience.

What they see everyday, such as the environment and culture where they live or the combination of places they have visited, will be revealed and become works of art containing elements of beauty and taste.

Some people say that artists are born.

Responding to this, Iman feels that "to become an artist is to experience a flow." No one knows for certain whether a child is born to become an artist or a doctor". I agree, those are just opinions of what people are seeing.

The beginning of Iman's creation



Since he was little, Iman liked to play with colors. At the ages of 4-12 when he definitely didn't know the meaning of art, I am unsure if I can call the instinct to spontaneously draw on walls, art. His hobby of drawing did not occur all of a sudden, but rather as a result of seeing his father paint very often.

His father, Roesli Hakim was a painter from Sumatra living in the city of Denpasar. Roesli's passion for painting was not influenced by a family with an artistic bloodline, but by his own interest in movie posters and cinema billboards.

As a teenager, Roesli studied from Dr. Djoelham and Tino Sidin. Long story short, Iman's father migrated to Yogyakarta and met many senior painters there. Then he joined Sanggar SIM (Young Indonesian Artists) led by S. Sudjojono. After going back and forth between Jogja and Bali, he finally settled in Bali in the 1960's and joined Sanggar Citra and Sanggar Kamboja.

Iman still feels motivated by his father's way of being an artist. For example, his father did not feel the need to be continuously exhibiting his works. Not for lack of appreciation or invitations, but because he always refused and stated that he had no paintings. Yet the reality was different. Iman felt that for his father, being able to work and support the family was a satisfaction in itself. "There is no need to overdo it, focus on one's own strength and the reality of life." From Iman's statement, it can be seen that his role model is someone close to him; his father.

Seeing his father painting very often indirectly motivated Iman to pursue art. His father was really devoted to the arts, and his responsibility to the family to send his three children to school. His father quickly became aware of his youngest son's hobbies. Iman was asked, "What do you want to be? If you are serious about becoming a painter, you should be more active and serious about sketching," he recalls,

making him determined to go to school at the Sekolah Menengah Seni Rupa (SMSR, High school of Fine Art in Bali) in 1986-1989. It was at SMSR that Iman began to find close friends. These friendships continued until he went to college.

Iman and his friends from SMSR, namely, Wiradana, Nyoman Sukari, Tenang, Wayan Sunadi, Nyoman Suriawan, and other friends continued their art education at the Yogyakarta Indonesian Art Institute (ISI), majoring in Fine Arts. His journey to become an artist was not something that just happened but rather developed from an environment of influences and ripe processes.

"Lecturers at ISI Yogyakarta are good and experienced. But you have to be prepared for the consequences because you will be trained hard on campus. Their intentions are good. So you have to be strong," this was a message from one of Iman's seniors that he still remembers. That was right and Iman agrees. I must be strong, mentally and physically. The harsh criticism from the lecturers, if they are not good at sorting and choosing, could make a potential artist lose confidence in him/herself.

Some people think that if you want to become an artist, you don't need to study. There are several arguments for this. Some argue that, "the important thing is to keep creating artworks,"

and others argue that "wasting money and time gives you no freedom". In my opinion, these arguments are not completely false, they are to be made untrue if the critics are able to prove their point in real life practice.

Talking about the "lack of freedom" in art schools, maybe the idea arose because in art schools we are obliged to make works with themes and material aspects have been determined by the lecturer. This common thought process actually made me interested in asking Teguh Ritma Iman directly, who had studied in art schools since high school. However, keep in mind, everyone possesses different perspectives and intentions.

While at the art high school, Iman felt that he should be grateful to be learning new theories, painting practices in various styles, and all the stages that are required in a learning program. "During my studies, there was always a sense of boredom that needed to be fought. Either the artwork didn't turn out well or in fact just hadn't been said to be bad yet. However, all that must be devoured, whether it be good or bad, to later train your imagination, bring out the strength of character, and hone your artistic instincts," said Iman, as a former art school student.

If what we believe is that the real world exists outside of education institutions, then so does the artist. While in Yogyakarta, Iman

pursued his career by participating in many exhibitions and building good relationships. After graduating from the Indonesian Art Institute in Yogyakarta, Iman returned to his homeland in Denpasar to continue his artistic career by pioneering and having the courage to start his first studio, Ritma Studio on Jalan Dayung Sanur, Bali. Now he has a new art space with his fellow artists from Bali, called Kaktus Art Space which is located at Jalan Mertasari No. 8, Sanur, Denpasar.

Iman actually planned to live and work in Yogyakarta. But the reason he decided to return to Bali was because his mother was very ill at that time, causing him to prioritize the one who had given birth to him and raised him. However, this did not stop him from creating artworks. In fact, returning to his hometown made him more comfortable and he found many new inspirations.

Community as his path to create artworks

At that time, students from Bali studying at ISI Yogyakarta would automatically join the Sanggar Dewata Indonesia (SDI) community. SDI, which was founded by Nyoman Gunarsa, Made Wianta, Pande Gede Supada, Nyoman Arsana, and Wayan Sika, is a gathering place for students from Bali to express themselves and network outside campus. Iman is grateful to have teachers as well as seniors who are willing to embrace their younger comrades while outside of Bali.

Iman and his friends from Bali enthusiastically demonstrated the strengths of their respective regions through their best work. When a big exhibition was held, Iman and other SDI members would participate with works from different study program backgrounds. When there was an exhibition in Jogja, they participated. They also showcased their works in exhibitions in Bali and Jakarta. Participating in these exhibitions was a fortunate and very valuable experience for them.

Sanggar Dewata Indonesia does not restrain its members from forming smaller groups within it. So Iman together with his 90s class consisting of Nyoman Sukari, I Made Wiradana, I Ketut Tenang, Ida Wayan Bagus Krishna, and other friends actively gathered and held joint exhibitions at that time. Then a smaller group was formed called Group 11 which contained 11 members from the Sanggar Dewata Bali.

In 2008, Iman became a part of the Karang Bali Artist Community (KBAC). Karang Bali Artist Community is a community that brings together painters of all ages who have a vision of maintaining the beauty and uniqueness of their group. The uniqueness of Karang Bali lies in its members consisting of young and senior painters. Then in 2018, Iman and other Balinese painters formed a group of 20 members to create an art space in Bali which was named,

Kaktus Art Space. Before the pandemic, Kaktus Art Space regularly held joint exhibitions. In 2020, Iman took part in the Bunga Karang Art Community which acts as a forum for artists from Indonesia and abroad within various genres of painting who share in the spirit of advancing Indonesian art, especially Bali as an example of diversity within itself.

Sincerity In Figure, Nuance And Decoration

Let's enter into the thoughts of Teguh Ritma Iman in his process of searching for artistic concepts. For some people, expressing what is on their mind can be through many methods. Iman chooses to express it in an artistic method. Expression through art is manifested when he feels fresh, happy, and carefree. It is at these moments that the urge to create becomes more intense. However, this does not mean that when he is not in a good condition, he does not make art. Creating is like making a friend and art is like a friend.

Under any circumstances, an artist continues to create art, even if his mind and body are unstable. It is a challenge for each artist to control his life conflicts so that it does not affect his enthusiasm for creating artwork. Instead, utilize the changing emotions to produce a variety of visual works. This will produce translations such as: red for being angry or brave, yellow meaning cheerful, green meaning nature, and so on.

The essence of making art is to strive for totality. The totality of an artwork does not mean that the material has to be of high quality so that it is expensive; materials found at home such as turmeric in the garden and coffee to drink in the morning can also be used as materials to support an artist's work process. This is what an artist with a "jiwa ketok" (visible soul) looks like according to Teguh Ritma Iman.

With his return to the Island of the Gods, the concept of his work grew stronger by taking inspiration from nature, the life and activities of humans, and other unique objects. What he captured is then presented through a medium in his unique style. The figures of women, boats, fishermen, and natural beauty are characteristic of Teguh Ritma Iman works.

His brushstrokes are smooth and firm, the colors tend to be natural and not too bright. When creating artworks, Iman likes to highlight the lines of the sketch that cannot be removed.

In Teguh Ritma Iman's journey from paper to paper and canvas to canvas, we can easily find the recurring figures of women. Iman doesn't choose women as his inspiration because they are of the opposite sex, but because he is amazed by them. Iman admires the motherhood that exists in women. The way that mothers become pregnant, give birth, and nurture their loved one leaves Iman in awe of women.



Fish Seller, 2006

The woman who first emerged as the root of inspiration for Iman's work was his own mother, Ni Made Rastiti, who is native to Denpasar. She must have faced one of the biggest choices and challenges of her life when she chose to follow the religion of her husband as a woman born Hindu. His mother had gone through that period very smoothly. She married and became the housewife of a painter from Sumatra.

Iman saw the strength of his mother's heart who never complained of being "tired" and seemed to enjoy a woman's daily activities in general. Iman had only ever seen his mother's tiredness indicated by her short rests. Washing, sweeping, cooking, cleaning her husband's studio were all done with great love and sincerity. Without fail,

she showed her appreciation for her husband by learning to sew and experimenting with her husband's colors, which resulted in beautiful garments. Iman saw a fighting spirit in his mother to always be there for, and learn to live together with her father. "That's why I always kept the batik cloth that your grandparents made. Those that are already faded due to age should not fall to the floor and be used as a rag," my father said to me, making me realize that his mother's loyalty, sincerity, and love had been passed down to my father, unconsciously, and he needed to be reminded of it.



Pleasure Abundance, 100 x 200 cm, 2020

All things involved with beauty leave Imam captivated, and he will immediately be drawn to them. Just like the beauty that radiates from some of the sceneries that he has encountered. Based on his feelings, he will paint the objects. Imam is grateful that he now lives surrounded by coastal scenery, providing inspiration for his artworks and reminding him of childhood memories.

It is familiar to us because we often see boats, fishermen and fish as subjects in his paintings. These three images are components that Imam often sees in one place: the beach. Of course,

they are not painted with the same composition as real life. From my observations, Imam will combine the objects from the coast into an atmosphere filled with sensations of waiting, struggling and enjoying life. It's true, "Father saw fishermen who sailed out to sea at night without fear of the dangers lying in the vast world of water. But to the fishermen, the sea is just a place that provides opportunity to continue living. The same thoughts are reflected in the fisherwomen, who wait for fish to be sold in the morning."



Good Morning, 80cm x 135cm, 2017

Teguh Ritma Iman likes big trees with spreading branches, like the banyan tree. Iman feels freshness, comfort and peace in their presence. It is no surprise that he sometimes expresses his feelings by using the symbol of this leafy tree in his artworks. Iman realizes when he is seized by beauty and seeks to dig

into the power behind it. However, the banyan tree as a symbol, did not come from nowhere. All around him, Iman is no stranger to the sight of these trees. If we take notice of tradition, it becomes apparent that banyan trees are held sacred in Bali.



Morning At The Lake Kintamani, 120 cm x 140 cm, 2015

And what about the leaves decorating Imam's paintings? They are not just there to fill empty space, neither are they there because leaves are easy objects to paint. Leaves are chosen by Imam as a symbol of life. They are poured all over his paintings to represent movement. Growing leaves will eventually fall to the earth where the tree stands. The leaves that grow together in one branch are like us humans with lives always interconnected. The collaborations between humans are like the collaborations in nature. Always working together in a cycle of returning to The Creator, and how nothing ever really ends as we have

children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. This is my take on the symbolism of the leaves in Imam's works.

It may be because Teguh Ritma Iman and I share a strong bond as father and daughter, but most importantly, I can observe the sensitivity that allows Iman to feel the sincerity within someone's life. The sincerity that came from his father who felt the satisfaction of his own work, from his mother who was always striving and loyal to her family, from those with the strength to enjoy their lives, and from nature as a platform and instrument to those in search of life.

Goal of work

We all know that before the pandemic, Bali was a favorite holiday destination for domestic and international tourists. Bali is well known as an island with lots of tourists. This fact greatly impacts the economic lives of Bali, especially artists. Just how they are impacted depends on the artist, each of whom have their own perspective and point of view.

Iman also has his own perspective. Even though there are a lot of tourists in his neighborhood, he does not change the form of his art. In other words, Iman has no intention of following market demands and doesn't intend for his paintings to be bought by tourists. However, it isn't unusual for artists to change their art style in order to be successful in the tourist markets. If Iman were to also take on that practice, it would result in a conflict within himself. He still cannot make work in this way because in his opinion, "You shouldn't create artworks with elements that are forced and pressured."

There are people, domestic and foreign, who have said that Iman's work is similar to other artists that Iman doesn't even know. Iman is not a person who has the habit of looking and observing other people's works too deeply. Not because he is lazy, but because he just doesn't want to. He does not want to observe other people's work for too long and unconsciously

make his own works similar. Iman avoids this so that his works are fully created from the results of his own ideas without imitating the works of others.

Taking care of Artwork and its Audience



More and more now, the meaning of 'art' changes, as according to the present moment the result of any human effort can be considered a work of art. This means that art can be made of mediums that were previously unthinkable and can be realized under special consideration and attention. As viewers, we see works of art as works that have some essence of beauty. So the work of Teguh Ritma Iman is included in one of the options for the meaning of a work of art.

With a full journey, emotional feelings, and the urge to make artworks into masterpieces, it is not easy for the artist to consider a work finished. Sometimes dissatisfaction still lingers. Of course, the artist has an image of what he wants to achieve so that the audience can understand the artwork as he wants them to.

However, the journey toward the hopes of an artist may not necessarily be followed by the audience who sees the work.

The vast field of art can be narrowed down and shortened by human technology. The space and mediums used also influences how a work of art is perceived in the eyes of art viewers. It is not surprising that many artists regularly participate in exhibitions as a means of seeking attention. Because in the end, it is a meeting point for the artist, his artworks, and their audience.

The encounter between art and audience, and the search for meaning in an artwork is sometimes unpredictable. It will occur automatically as if the audience and the work of art is connected through a common thread.

The difficulty of having someone who likes and also enjoys works of art makes artists, including Iman maintains the relationship between himself and the works that have been made and his relationship with the audience of his work.

Although before that, his works had been enjoyed by himself. Maintaining works of art is neither easy nor difficult. But it requires attention and sensitivity. Much like maintaining the relationship between artists and audiences. Even when art viewers may not have had the chance to become collectors, their relationships must be maintained. Indeed, as artists produce works, audiences provide appreciation, and that is the relationship that must be maintained between them.

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Awards

- 1990 : Best Sketch and Watercolor Painting from FSRD
- ISI Yogyakarta
- 1991 : Finalist for Oil Painting in FSRD - ISI Yogyakarta
- 1996 : Finalist for Philip Morris Indonesia Art Award 3
Jakarta

Solo Exhibition

- 2004 : "Women" at Ritma Fine Art Sanur
- 2006 : "Observation: at Salim Gallery, Kerobokan Kuta
- 2010 : Prada Lounge at Ngurah Rai Airport
- 2015 : "Women In Life" at Ganesha Gallery, Four
Seasons Resort Jimbaran
- 2017 : "Natural Harmony" at Bidadari Mandala Gallery,
Mas, Ubud

Group Exhibition

- 1990 : Group Exhibition with Sanggar Dewata Indonesia in
Denpasar, Yogyakarta and Bogor
- 1991 : Class of '90', Yogyakarta
- 1992 : Group Exhibition with Sanggar Dewata Indonesia in
Denpasar and Yogyakarta
- 1997 : "Kelompok 11" (Group 11) at Sika Art Gallery, Ubud
- 1998 : "Die Sammlung des Palastes von Bandung" at Galerie
Fahrenhorst, Hamein, Germany
- 1999 : at 37 Museum fuer Voekerkunde, Frankfurt, Germany
- 2007 : "Global Warming" at Garuda Wisnu Kencana,
Jimbaran Bali
"Sanur Festival" at Veranda Gallery, Denpasar
"Care Appreciation" with Karang Bali Artist at Rita
Gallery Sanur

2008	: "Two Generations" with his father Roesli Hakim at Ganesha Gallery, Four Seasons Resort Bali, Jimbaran	2019	: Artitude at Klub Kokos Gallery Ubud
2010	: "Bali Beyond" Sanggar Dewata Indonesia at Bentara Budaya Bali		: Armageddon Sampah Indonesia Art Exhibition at Werdhapura Hotel, Sanur, Bali
	: "In Praise of Women" Ganesha Gallery, Four Seasons Resort Bali		: April Mop at Kaktus Art Space, Sanur
2011	: "Spirit 90" at Santrian Galleri, Sanur		: "Played on Paper" at Kaktus Art Space, Sanur
2013	: "Ironi In Paradise" SDI at Museum Arma Ubud		: Group Exhibition with the Kaktus group at Hadiprana Galeri Jakarta
2014	: Singapore Art Fair with Purpa Gallery in Singapore		: ACBK Exhibition (Art community Bunga Karang) for Sumpah Pemuda at Museum Agung Bung Karno
2016	: "Glorifying Colours" Exhibition with Sanggar Dewata Indonesia at the Museum Nyoman Gunarsa		: "Played on Paper" Exhibition at Kaktus Art Space
2017	: Tribute to I Gusti Made Deblog at Denpasar Art Space	2020	: Group exhibition with the Art Community Bunga Karang Bali at Imigrasi kelas 1 Building, Ngurah Rai, Kabupaten Badung.
	Natural Harmoni at di Bidadari Art Space, Ubud		: Virtual exhibition "Stay at Home!" through artist social media.
2018	: "On Fire" Exhibition at Kaktus Art Space		
	: "Nouveau" at Oka Kartini Gallery Ubud		
	: "Unlimited" at Kaktus Art Space		

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ABOUT Denpasar 2020: REGENERATION

These writings are part of writing workshop which is a series of activities of Denpasar 2020 program: Regeneration. This program gives free course to 8 young people to participate in the series of workshop which focused on writing and creative review about artistic and cultural activities. These 6 weeks workshop includes broad topics, from art curatorship, citizen journalism, photography, review and critics to performing art. 4 invited mentors are well known culture and art figure in Bali and Indonesia, namely Anwar 'Jimpe' Rachman, Farah Wardani, Made Adhyana 'Ole', dan Syafiudin Vifick.

DenPasar is an annual program organized by CushCush Gallery (CCG), an alternative creative platform located in downtown Denpasar that dedicates itself to multidisciplinary collaboration by bridging various creative fields including arts and design.

