

# ARCHITECTURE                      AND *Dance                      Inside                      Ninus*

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When given the task of writing about a figure in the Bali arts community for the Denpasar 2020: Regeneration workshop, I was a bit confused. The writing had to dig deeper than just surface level, which was where I met my challenge: who do I write about? On one hand, I would like to build new relationships with artists that I don't yet know, but on the other hand, writing in depth about newly introduced artists might be more difficult. If I write about a close artist friend, I might be able to write in depth, but I wouldn't be building new relationships. Many discussions later, I finally decided to write about an artist that I haven't personally met.

To solve the problem of not being close to the artist, I chose an artist who shares the same discipline - Architecture - which I am currently studying. The artist that came to mind when thinking of architecture is Andhika Annissa, more commonly known as 'Ninus'. She is all at once a dancer, choreographer and an architect. We have only met briefly and exchanged words a few times, but I know Ninus from one of our mutual friends who have collaborated with her in the past. From what I know about Ninus, I am interested to find out how she combines the disciplines of architecture and dance and how the different disciplines influence one another.



*Adhika Annissa, also known as Ninus | Source: Ninus*

Finding out more about Ninus was a multi-step process. Interviews were an integral part to the investigation, but I also found out more about her through the people she has collaborated with, including Wayan Martino (a videographer and photographer), Medy Mahasena (a filmmaker), and Jacko (a dancer and performer). From these people I discovered different perspectives of Ninus, enriching my own understanding of Ninus as an artist and person. Instagram was another source of information that I used to find out more about Ninus, because in my

opinion Instagram is a person's archive or library where they upload photos and videos about daily life and other activities. Looking at the photos they post, and the captions they write, we can get to know a bit more about the owner of the account. Who is she? What is her background? What are her achievements? All of these questions can be answered through social media, one of which is Instagram.

Of course, not all activities are uploaded on Instagram; an account is always curated by its owner. What is uploaded are the things they want to show. Things they want to share with others. Things that illustrate the owner of the account to other people. Ninus's Instagram in particular has a vast archive of her past performances and architecture projects, which is why it was an important source of information for my investigation. From her Instagram, I came up with questions to ask Ninus and the people she collaborated with,

and I have summarized my findings here in this paper.

There are a few posts in Ninus's Instagram which drew my attention. Some of them will be discussed below:



*Ninus and Susana in one of the scenes of Une Rencontre | Source: Instagram Ninus*

## Une Rencontre (An Encounter)

An incomplete house with concrete walls and an absent roof. The concrete pillars in front form an unfinished terrace. The windows and doors with holes seemed to have lost their frames. Looking left and right there are large volcanic rocks and tall dry grass. It was like seeing a haunted house. The house, which was only half finished, was in the middle of its construction and was abandoned. There

are two women dancing there. One is on the front porch while the other hides behind a wall, occasionally exposing herself through the unfinished window. The dancer who appeared in the window frame was Ninus.





*Unfinished houses and their surroundings | Source: Instagram Ninus*

These houses are actually a place for resting to the people who mengayah (help to prepare traditional ceremonies) at the Ulun Danu Batur Temple. For the people taking part in ceremonies that can span over a few days, these abandoned houses become a 'rest area' of sorts. Why do they rest there? Why not at home? Why are the houses unfinished? In actuality, the houses of the people participating in the ceremonies are

quite far away, and they have to prepare for the ceremony days in advance. To anticipate this, they built a place to rest close to the temple so there was no need to go home. This house which uses the sky as a roof becomes a space for meetings, gatherings and goodbyes. Like an improvised camping tent, the people spread a tarp over the four pillars to form a makeshift roof, which they can then take home after the ceremony is over.

Despite how they look, these houses were not abandoned, they were designed in this particular way: without a roof, without windows and doors, and not plastered. Because, indeed, it is only supposed to be a temporary resting place. Ninus, like myself, saw this building in the perspective of an architect. We both saw an unfinished building. However, when seen from the perspective of the people who have come from far away to mengayah at Ulun Danu Batur Temple, these buildings are more than enough to fulfill their purpose. Seeing something from different perspectives can change the value of the object. With a certain perspective, even this unfinished house can feel like it is complete.

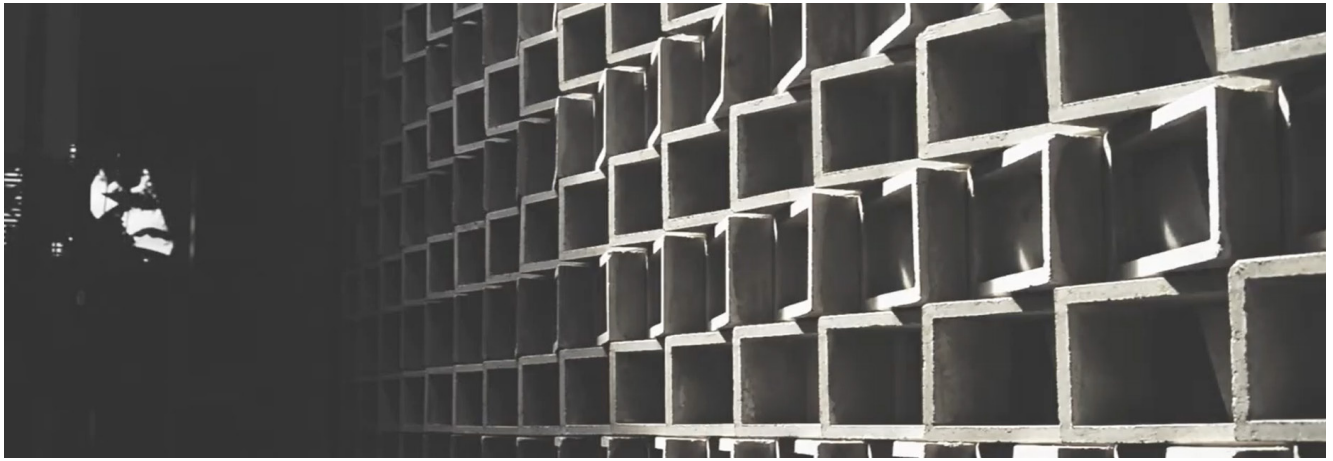
Ninus responded to these rooms with a dance. A dance of first meetings, living together and then finally separating; drawing parallels to how the unfinished house may be used by the local residents who use the space as a rest area during ceremonies. The people who come together to prepare the ceremony meet friends and strangers in this room, introduce themselves, have conversations together, and live together for several nights. After the ceremony is over, they say their goodbyes and return to their real homes, leaving the unfinished building until the next ceremony.

# PARIGATA HOUSE: REPERTOIR OF A REINTERPRETATION

A video showcasing a house through minute details that are often overlooked. The corner of a room, the outline of a fence, the shape of sunlight coming through the spaces between blinds. These unconventional but beautiful angles and details are encapsulated in one video to describe the Parigata House.

What is the connection between Ninus and the curation of these beautiful details? Isn't it the videographer who deserves credit because he is the one who weaves together the footage into a video? When asking Martino, the videographer of this project, I discovered that Ninus was very involved in the process of making the video. Many of the angles and perspectives showcased in

the video were in fact the decision of Ninus, captured after discussions between Ninus and Martino. Ninus was also involved in the construction of the house, so she is familiar with the interesting angles and perspectives of Parigata House. The architectural lens that Ninus highlights in the video is shown clearly through the symmetrical lines, as well as the volume and composition in all of the videos.



*Images from the video Parigata House: Repertoire of A Reinterpretation*  
Source: Wayan Martino youtube channel



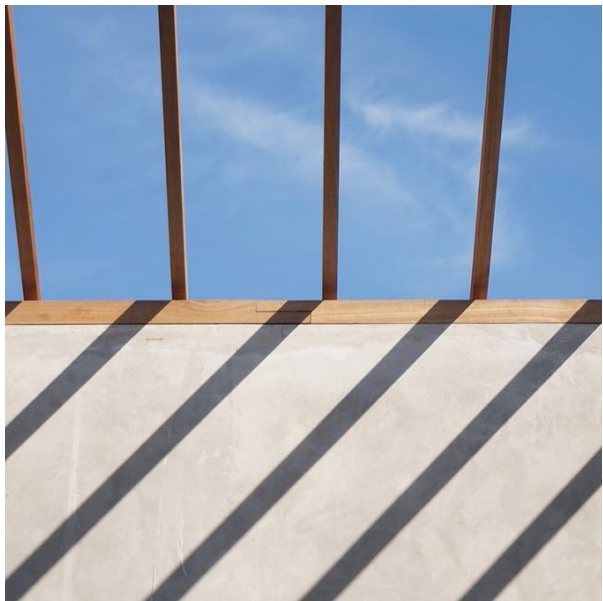


*Ninus and her friends performing 'Parigata House' at Uma Seminyak | Source: Ninus*

The screening of this video was turned into a performance in Uma Seminyak. Ninus and a few of her friends responded to the video through dance movements reminiscent of the geometric shapes, visuals and the atmosphere of the video. These movements are combined into a dance, which shows how Ninus combines architecture with her dance. In this project, architecture was the trigger and inspiration for the concept of the dance.



## Foto-foto lainnya





*Some pictures from Ninus's Instagram | Source : Ninus*

These photos are a few among the many photos on Ninus's Instagram. They may look ordinary and might be ignored by many people, but from these photos, it is clear to me that Ninus is an architect. It is in the way she frames and composes her photographs, and how she showcases them in a post. Other posts in her Instagram show Ninus's training and practice as a dancer. From something as mundane as Instagram posts, we can already see Ninus as an architect as well as a dancer.

All of my discoveries about Ninus made me appreciate the effort she puts into her works. Ninus was born in Jakarta on September 16th 1990, and when she moved to Bali in 2014, she attempted to use alternative spaces as a stage for her performances. When Ninus performs, the space is not only a backdrop to her dance, but an integral part of it, because she always makes an effort to understand the context of the space itself. It is unlike most people, who come and make performances in a space without looking at the context, destroying the context of the space. In her performance of 'Une Rencontre', Ninus who was not born in Bali, is detached from the space of the performance. So she reads the local context and translates it into something more universal so that she and others watching can connect with the space. It is this

understanding of spatial context that is then developed into the dance choreography. Understanding local contexts and then finding a personal connection with it, so that the work or performance is not disconnected from herself. I think understanding context, especially the context of the surrounding local space, is an important step in all artistic processes that we often forget. In Ninus's case, she reads the context of the space that will be her stage, so that her performance (whether it be dance, theater or something else) and its surroundings are merged into a 'site specific performance'.

Every space will have its own unique context, its own history and background. It is just a choice of wanting to really understand the context or not. It's a shame when a room full of context and history is not understood and made part of a performance. Ninus as a dancer often uses alternative spaces as part of her performances. These spaces become places for her to experiment with new possibilities in her dance. I think her background as an architect also influences how she sees a space, reads its context and then weaves it into a performance.

As an architect, Ninus has worked at Yoka Sara International for two years in 2014-2016.

While working there, Ninus gained many new insights and perspectives. She told me that her biggest take away from her experience working and learning with Yoka Sara was the freedom and infinite possibilities in building design. A building design concept doesn't have to be purely architectural, but it could be based on other things that have similar

relationships. For example, the layout of a shopping route in a shopping complex can be compared to a fashion show. The shops and stalls are seen as the audience who see the customer as the models. The customers are the center of attention, and the main focus in this design. This concept of a shopping complex being a fashion show was intriguing to me. Indirectly, I think shopping complexes and fashion shows have something similar. The audience (sellers) try to see the model (customers). Sellers will pay close attention to potential customers, and the customer will be able to see all the shops and feel like they are in the middle of the audience (shops).

While working at Yoka Sara International, Ninus also had the opportunity to collaborate with several other dancers. Yoka Sara is one of the architects in Bali known for his uniqueness, and he also made several installations for the Sprites Bali events. Because of his involvement with the Sprites Bali at that time, Ninus got the opportunity to collaborate with several different artists involved with the event, such as Ari Rudenko. These collaborations helped Ninus develop many new perspectives in looking at both architecture and dance.

Encounters with all kinds of people have certainly shaped Ninus into who she is today. Looking closely at Ninus' dances, besides understanding the space that is used as a stage, her choreography is also very architectural, as seen from the composition and how she chooses the point of view of her performance. Most of Ninus' works are made into videos as well as live performances. The

camera angles and compositions that she chooses when making the dance videos look very architectural. The camera angle is quite significant when talking about a performance being videotaped; Unlike live performances, which is viewed from one point of view depending on where the seat is. But that's what can be explored even further when creating videos. There are many points of view that can be played around with. However, this game of perspective can also be a double-edged sword. Sometimes the point of view can make the scene stronger, but the point of view could also weaken the scene. Much consideration should be taken when choosing the viewpoints. The point of view or angle chosen by Ninus is very architectural in its compositional placement. In architecture, it is important to adjust composition in order to maximise the space in a comfortable and visually attractive way. This is the same in the world of performance, as composition also plays an important role in theater and dance. Composition of the largest scale, such as the position of the building and the patterns on the floor matter as much as composition on a much smaller scale, involving the placement of the body during dance. The way that Ninus choreographs movements to look less lopsided or more balanced to make it more enjoyable for the audience to view.

I think this is where dance and architecture intersect within Ninus. How one discipline greatly influences other disciplines. Architecture is used in dance as well as dance in architecture. What really interests me is how

dance and performing arts are brought into the process of designing a building. A good example is a project she built in 2018-2019. She got a project to build a house within 150 square meter of land. She paid attention to the performative aspects of the building she was designing, like when people fall asleep in their room, they can still see what's going on in the living room. Of course, those in the living room would not be able to see into the other rooms. I imagine if I were in the room it would feel like I was watching something. I could be able to see the events happening in the living room without having to go outside the room. There is a performative aspect that Ninus brings to its design. Residents are given a solution for how the space can become a stage for their performance. Whether you view it from the context of a performance stage or from the context of functionality, it will greatly facilitate the residence. Residents can see events in other rooms without having to leave the room. The efficient use of space ensures that it is maximised. Apart from that, it's also an attractive selling point from a sales point of view.

When studying architecture, we are required to respond to the site given when building. How is the weather? How is the condition of the surrounding site? What are the social and cultural conditions surrounding the site? This will greatly affect the design of a building. But often this knowledge is not applied in the world of architectural practice. There are many reasons for this, from client requests, to budget constraints, and so on. Sometimes the



knowledge learnt from studying architecture seems to be lost or unused just due to client's referrals and limitations on budget. In fact, if the knowledge is used properly, the buildings built would definitely be more optimal in all aspects, both for its residents and its surroundings. Ninus tries to make sure that the buildings she designs respond to the context of the surroundings. What are the ambient conditions and what are the design solutions for these conditions. Apart from that, she also incorporated performance into her designs. Letting the two disciplines influence each other. How the knowledge learnt so far affects each other in a human body. How these disciplines shape who she is today. We can also understand how her ideas and works are executed when looking at what disciplines she studied, because the discipline or experiences she has been through so far will greatly contribute to the process of creating

an artist. I am very interested in seeing the relationship between the disciplines that influence each other in a person, because we can learn something from that, and of course we can also apply it to ourselves; because the body holds a lot of knowledge and experience within it.

In Ninus' case, I tried to see the relationship between architectural and performing arts (in this case dance) disciplines. Seeing how she directs her architectural knowledge into dance that can be taken and brought into the art field that I am currently involved in. That's what I want to learn from Ninus. In the very least, my architectural knowledge will be useful in future work processes. Knowledge is not simply learnt and used. Ninus, in this case, consciously connects architecture and dance, influencing each other to form who she is today.

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## ABOUT DenPasar2020: REGENERATION

This article is the product of a writing workshop which is part of a series of activities from the DenPasar2020: Regeneration program. DPS2020 writing workshop provides free mentorship to 8 young people to participate in a series of workshops that focus on writing and creative reviews about artistic and cultural activities. The 6-week workshop covered a wide range of topics from arts curatorial, citizen journalism, photography, reviews and critique of performing arts. The 4 invited mentors are art and cultural figures known in Bali and Indonesia, including Anwar "Jimpe" Rachman, Farah Wardani, Made Adnyana "Ole", and 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.

