



Yoesoef Olla

THE YAK issue eight sep/oct/nov 2005

Tucked quietly behind a roadside tree on the bustling Lasmana/Oberoi road, lies a new addition to Seminyak's growing modern art gallery collection. Po'on Studio derives its name from the Indonesian word *pohon*, or tree. The artist driving this studio, Yoesoef Olla explains that if the tree was not there first, maybe neither he nor the gallery would be either.

A tall, wiry figure, Yoesoef calmly pours two beers as we begin to discuss his life and works' goals. The small studio space is lined with numerous canvases, which house the symbols and characters most dear to him. Originally from Jakarta, Yoesoef began drawing and painting from an early age. During his teenage years he became interested in music before returning to the visual world of graffiti. Moving to Yogyakarta for two years, initially to study at the design academy, he began 'independent study' at the advice of a scholar familiar with his same innate talent.

Moving to Bali in '99, Olla began airbrushing large scale, fluoro-fantasy art for a year, before returning to the canvas. Citing Affandi, Basquiat and Cobra as his strongest influences, Olla's current work shares a similar vein of uprising and rebellion. Using his own dictionary of symbols and imagery, Olla's paintings confront the audience with global questions and dilemmas, we ultimately must answer for ourselves. Working directly onto his canvases, Olla translates his ongoing personal experiences into a rich modern symbolism that transcends the boundaries of language. This frenetic pace and method usually delivers a potent message.

One of his larger pieces entitled *Bebas*, or Free, draws upon conversations with a close friend stricken with addiction and disease. Shortly before passing, the friend spoke of the bad and good things he had experienced in life. Ultimately the friend felt that his positive actions had outweighed the negative, and this gave him the peace to pass on. Yoesoef finished the painting two days before his friend died, and it now adorns his wall as a testament to his friend and to what Yoesoef learnt from him.

Another large canvas titled *Pemusnahan* or Destroyer, refers to effects of over-competition and mass-production sometimes found in Bali. Olla points out that sometimes a designer, or creator, of something can ultimately forget why they began in the first place, and that the distance between ego and reality can grow out of proportion within the growth of 'order'.

There is indeed a quaint Basquiat-like quality to Olla's works. The punk sensibility of rebellion and scrawling subversion buzz out loud from his works. The recurring symbol of a hand or fist appears in reference to rebelling and confrontation. Plus and minus signs weigh the positive and the negative things he sees in life. In one of Yoesoef's most recent works entitled *Ranjang Bayi* or Baby-Stroller, alphabet stencils refer to his unborn child. Symbols of motherhood, hope and future abound in this one and I realize once again that his messages are indeed often universal. His ballooning pregnant wife chats meanwhile on the front porch. When asked if they already had thought of a name for his future son, Olla replies with a wry smile, "Basquiat".

There is crackling intensity that emanates from the Olla's small studio as he prepares for his upcoming solo show at the Gemarimba Gallery in Kuala Lumpur. Having served his purposes for now, and with the addition of his first child, Yoesoef will soon move to a larger studio space. His 'dictionary' has grown like the trees branches above him, out onto new horizons, and I can only share his excitement.

Po'on Studio is located at #21 Jalan Lasmana, Seminyak and is open daily. For more info please contact Yoesoef directly on +(62) 817 352 754 or email: po_on_studio@yahoo.com. Map ref.: G8.

REBEL by Lou Nietunz



with



OUT



a
Pause