

Transcending the footprints of human existence

Paul Hayanto Agusta, Contributor, Jakarta | Thu, 04/28/2011 10:19 AM | Art and Design

Mother Earth is a tough old girl. Enduring millions of years; bruised, battered, and abused by time and the human elements of technology and progress.

She remains strong, she fights back, she absorbs and transcends everything thrown at her. She is the ultimate survivor; a force not even Father Time can defeat. She is larger than life and beyond understanding; a space well-explored but never fully comprehended.

Mother Earth does not conform to us, we conform to her. When we force our will against her, the results can be devastating. When we approach her with respect, when we try to understand her beyond what we need from her, when we acknowledge that we are part of her and not her masters, only then will harmony reign.

In their collaborative exhibition, "The Earth is Sculpting Time", Indonesian filmmaker/visual artist/husband/muse, Faozan Rizal, and German dancer/sculptor/performance artist/ wife/muse, Katia Engel, explore the sense of peace attained through accepting, absorbing and gifting back nature's aesthetic elements in an attempt to comprehend the expansiveness of our outer environment by immersing ourselves in the innerspace of the human psyche.

Einstein once said that ordinary minds seek out the extraordinary, while extraordinary minds examine the ordinary; taking a close look to gain an encompassing understanding of a much larger existence.

This is apparent in the works resulting from the melding of minds and creative expertise of these two artists from two radically different physical and cultural landscapes now on display at Ark Gallery in South Jakarta.

Katia and Pao, as Faozan Rizal is popularly known, blend not only aesthetic sensitivities and cultural views in their explorative spiritual interaction with Mother Earth, they layer art form upon art form into a definitive approach to understanding where humans beings stand in the larger scheme of things.

Tanah Merah 1, a 150 x 100 centimeter photograph printed on canvas, is a prime example of this creative duo's richly explorative approach involving scouting out and immersing themselves in stunning landscapes, photographing them, and then taking the images in their minds and cameras back to the studio where what Mother Earth has gifted to them is taken into a secret inner human space and transformed into gifts to be given back to the giver.

For this particular work, Katia created smooth hollow guord-like ceramic pieces open at both ends that were then returned to the stark red-earth landscape that inspired them and set out in in a carefully calculated randomness before being photographed in preparation for further processing and presentation.

Katia says she discovered an important irony in the process of making holes in the ceramic and wooden sculptural pieces created for the purpose of highlighting the experiential interaction of the small and large spaces of human perception and existence.

The sculpted objects can be embraced in terms of their contained space, the darkness within, and the exit, as if through a tunnel, into light.

Set within the larger landscapes that triggered their initial emergence through the couple's collaborative creative process, Katia's sculptures also speak of the transience of human existence within the passage of time and the resilience and lastingness of Mother Earth.

One of the things that makes this ongoing exhibition a highly memorable one is that not only can the pieces be absorbed individually, but the spatial choreography set out in the wide open venue allows all of the works to be experienced as one unified installation piece.

The artists' clearly studied and thought deeply about the placement and visual flow of each given piece — photos, sculptures and video projections — in relation to the space and the visual convergence of all elements.

A fine example of this clever use of space is the multi-level presentation of the Kawah Putih (White Crater) 1, 2 and 3 series of photographs on canvas, which were set slightly above a striking sculptural display of red-clay pierced orbs.

In another particularly striking juxtaposition of artworks, the piece titled Bayan Tree interacts visually and spiritually with the work titled Tanah Lot 1 in an intriguing dance of intellectual and creative delving.

Overall, this exhibition makes one wish they could carry the images away with them. And the wonderful thing is that just as the sculptural pieces merge into and enhance the landscapes into which they are placed, while functioning as individual elements of the installation encompassing the exhibition space, each one of the large photographic images has the potential to enhance the large open wall spaces of modern residences or office building and hotel lobbies as visual odes to the beauty and significance of Mother Earth to humankind.

Bumi Memahat Waktu (The Earth is Sculpting Time)

A Multimedia Exhibition by Katia Engel and Faozan Rizal

At Ark Gallery at Jl. Senopati Raya No. 92, South Jakarta (above Bakoel Kopi coffee shop)

Open daily until May 1, 2011

For more information, visit:

www.arkgalerie.com