



CARINE
LEROY-BRAHAM

EMBODIED

Artwork & Exhibition
C A T A L O G

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Text by
Asmudjo J. Irianto

Translator
Henry Rolan

Graphic Design
Lawangwangi Creative Space

Photography
Artist's Collection





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Sublimitas Eros dan Tanathos
CARINE LEROY-BRAHAM

*"Women and the Universal!
Very interesting; one kind of giggles
because women have always been confined
to the realm of the Personal."
—Tring T. Minh-Ha*

KURATORIAL

PERSOALAN antara nature versus culture merupakan oposisi biner yang terus menerus diperdebatkan sepanjang peradaban manusia. Apakah hal terpokok dan hakiki bagi manusia adalah segala sesuatu yang terbentuk apa adanya secara alami? Atau sebaliknya menjadi kultural dan membentuk formulasi hidup yang teratur dan beradab merupakan hakikat terdasar menjadi manusia? Sebagai animal rationabile (binatang yang menggunakan rasio), manusia mampu melampaui properti animalistiknya dan memberdayakan dirinya menjadi spesies paling advance di muka bumi. Namun sebagian dari diri manusia tetap memiliki atribusi hewani, yang memiliki mekanisme tersendiri tanpa bisa dikendalikan sepenuhnya oleh rationale. Atribusi ini muncul dalam bentuk hasrat; suatu dorongan yang integral dalam diri setiap manusia, yang akan selalu ada dan mempengaruhi setiap pilihan hidup seseorang sejak ia lahir hingga tiba saat kematiannya.

Hasrat manusia termanifestasikan dalam ragam rupa; hasrat untuk berkuasa, hasrat untuk menjadi kaya raya, hasrat untuk mempengaruhi orang lain; dst. Kesemua bentuk hasrat ini berpangkal dari hasrat yang paling sederhana, yakni untuk merasakan kenikmatan (pleasure) dan menjauhi rasa sakit (pain) atau ketidaknyamanan (displeasure).

Sigmund Freud—sebagai figur pionir yang berhasil mengupas konsepsi hasrat ini ke tataran signifikan—lebih jauh lagi meyakini bahwa hasrat-hasrat manusia ini secara mendasar berpangkal dari dorongan seksual yang inheren berada pada diri setiap manusia. Suatu properti hewani yang cara kerjanya berjalan secara otonom, lepas dari kesadaran manusia sebagai makhluk rasional.

Menurut Freud, sepanjang sejarah peradabannya; hasrat, insting, atau dorongan seksual ini direpresi (ditekan) oleh manusia karena dianggap sebagai agen chaos.

Lebih jauh lagi Freud bertukar sejarah hidup manusia adalah sejarah dari represi mereka sendiri. Peradaban dapat terlaksana karena upaya manusia untuk menekan kesemua bentuk dorongan dan hasrat yang akan saling bentur antar kepentingan tiap individu jika dibiarkan terpenuhi. Dalam esainya yang cukup menantang "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", Freud menjelaskan bahwa dalam rangka preservasi diri, manusia mengembangkan semacam pertahanan diri yang disebut dengan reality principle untuk menekan hasrat (desire) agar tak menempatkan si manusia dalam kondisi terancam keberadaannya. Pada akhirnya keduanya bekerja dalam mekanisme saling lingkaran; dengan reality principle berusaha menunda pemenuhan hasrat sehingga menjadi instrumen perepresi gerak kehidupan manusia, dan di sisi lain hasrat yang bergerak menuntut pemenuhan (gratifikasi) secara menerus. Suatu pergulatan abadi antara keteraturan (cosmos) dan keliaran (chaos).

Sepanjang sejarah peradaban manusia, berbagai bentuk orde dan rambu-rambu dibentuk untuk membangun tatanan peradaban yang teratur. Agama, mitos, sains, dan hukum menjadi instrumen yang memastikan agar setiap individu dalam masyarakat bertingkah laku sesuai dengan orde dan aturan. Obsesi manusia terhadap keteraturan mengantar manusia ke dalam keberpihakan tak proporsional terhadap aspek Logos dibandingkan Eros.

Logos—yang dalam hal ini diartikan secara sederhana sebagai rasio, logika, akal, daya tahandan determinasi—dianggap sebagai properti dasar dalam proyek peradaban umat manusia.

Eros—yang merupakan simbolisasi kebebasan, kreativitas, vitalitas dan juga fatalitas—sebagai kontraposisi dari Logos, sering dianggap sebagai natur manusia yang liar, sulit dikontrol, feminin dan asing; yang karenanya perlu ditekan tumbuh geraknya.

Mengambil contoh tokoh mitologi Yunani Orpheus, Narcissus, dan Dionisius yang merupakan figur-figur pemboyong konsep Eros, mereka tak pernah dianggap sebagai simbol kebudayaan yang kanonikal dan cenderung dibuat antipatik. Sebaliknya Prometheus, Hercules dan Odiseus yang menyimbolkan akal (tipu daya), pengorbanan dan rasa sakit yang abadi justru menjadi tokoh heroik yang dipuja.

Pertanyaan mengenai hasrat sebagai bagian tak terpisahkan dari manusia, agaknya juga menarik perhatian seorang Carine Leroy-Braham.

Melalui pameran "Embodied" seniman asal Perancis ini mengejawantahkan dua dorongan dasar manusia yang saling beroposisi dalam konfigurasi yang justru harmonis dan saling komplementer dengan mengoperasikan simbol phalus dan tengkorak,

Carine menyajikan konsepsi Eros dan Thanatos dalam rangkaian karya yang meskipun berkesan paradoks namun tetap terintegrasi secara harmonis. Imaji-imaji tengkorak yang sarat dengan aura kematian dan keberakhiran, berpadu dengan berbagai ornamen-ornamen berwarna penuh vitalitas. Monolith phalus yang menjulang penuh keangkuhan berpadu dengan tengkorak-tengkorak putih yang feminin dan anggun melingkar mengelilingi simbol maskulinitas tersebut.

Konsep Eros dan Tanathos sendiri yang dikembangkan oleh Freud ini agaknya disadari Carine sebagai potensi simbolik—yang selain dapat tergali di tataran gagasan—juga dapat termanifestasikan secara artistik dalam bentuk karya dari pelbagai medium dan material.

Eros yang diartikan sebagai insting untuk bertahan hidup (survival); yang kerap termanifestasikan dalam bentuk hasrat untuk mencari kebahagiaan, kesenangan, cinta dan seksualitas; disajikan Carine melalui simbol phalus dan terkadang dalam bentuk bunga teratai. Di lain pihak Thanatos yang merupakan insting/hasrat pada kematian dan kondisi statis, kerap ditunjukkan oleh sikap putus asa dan penghancuran diri (self destruction)—yang konon termanifestasikan pula dalam bentuk agresi, perusakan, dan hasrat berkuasa; disajikan carine melalui simbol tengkorak.

Berbeda dengan logika oposisi antara Eros dan logos versi Carl Gustav Jung, baik Eros maupun tanathos dari sudut pandang Freudian dianggap sebagai properti dasar manusia yang sepanjang sejarah peradaban manusia perlu direpresi karena dianggap sebagai agen chaos.

Namun melalui “Embodied”, Carine tampak gamblang menyerukan suara yang berbeda. Lihat saja karya-karya lukis Carine yang menyiratkan ekspresivitas dan vitalitas—seolah mengolok pola-pola operasi kebudayaan kita selama ini terhadap konsep seksualitas dan kematian.

Di lain pihak karya tridimensional dan instalasi milik Carine juga cukup kentara menyuarakan opininya yang sarat dengan aura perayaan terhadap seksualitas dan kematian.

Sikap yang diambil Carine dapat dikatakan selaras dengan apa yang diyakini Herbert Marcuse. Pemikir asal Jerman ini mengutarakan kritiknya terhadap konsep Eros dan Thanatos Freudian, dengan menyatakan bahwa kedua dorongan manusiawi ini justru memiliki potensi untuk menyeimbangkan tatanan masyarakat industrial yang jenuh dalam pola mekanistik kapitalisme.

Marcuse meyakini bahwa Eros dapat disublimasi dari hasrat seksualitas yang senantiasa menuntut gratifikasi ala hewani, menjadi suatu hasrat yang dibarengi rasionalitas. Jika sebelumnya rasio menjadi instrumen pembangun peradaban yang mekanis dan robotik, dan bahkan bertugas sebagai opresor Eros, maka melalui keterbukaan dan pemahaman lebih jauh terhadap seksualitas itu sendiri, maka manusia akan mampu berpindah pada tataran rasionalitas yang lebih sublim terhadap seksualitas mereka, sehingga Eros tak perlu lagi direpresi.

“Under non-repressive conditions, sexuality tends to ‘grow into’ Eros – that is to say, toward self-sublimation in lasting and expanding relations (including work relations) which serve to intensify and enlarge instinctual gratification. Eros strive for ‘eternalizing’ itself in permanent order.”

“Eros redefines reason on his own terms. Reasonable is what sustains the order of gratification.”

Menyimak karya-karya Carine maka tersirat opini serupa akan proyek sublimasi Eros ala Marcuse. Salah satu karya Carine dalam pameran “Embodied” ini adalah karya monolith tiga dimensi berbentuk phalus yang sengaja ia hadirkan dalam warna perak. Akan menjadi jebakan yang sangat mudah menggiring asumsi pemirsa pameran, saat melihat karya ini sebagai penanda kritikal Carine terhadap supremasi maskulinitas terhadap femininitas.

Namun jauh dari itu Carine tampaknya justru menempatkan karya ini sebagai objek desire bagi dirinya. Sapan perak yang menutupi keseluruhan tubuh karya, dibarengi dengan pemosisian karya di atas pedestal batu semakin menempatkan phalus sebagai objek yang sangat berharga di mata Carine. Phalus di sini kemudian tersublimasi sebagai implementasi penelusuran estetis seorang Carine Leroy-Braham, alih-alih dimaknai semata instrumen biologis yang harus direpresi mekanisme gratifikasinya.

Menyelami lebih dalam konsep gratifikasi Eros. Menurut Herbert Marcuse, prinsip gratifikasi berkait erat dengan pleasure principle. Saat properti-properti Eros (hasrat seksualitas) harus dipenuhi (:gratified), maka rintangan terbesarnya adalah keberadaan waktu dan logika keberakhiran. Karena timelessness merupakan pleasure yang paling ideal, maka keberadaan kematian menjadi rintangan bagi gratifikasi Eros.

Meskipun melalui reality principal, Eros terbelunggu mekanismenya secara kultural, namun secara tak terhindarkan ia tak bisa berkelit dari prinsip kematian/keberakhiran. Oleh karena itu eksistensi Thanatos (:dorongan menuju kematian dan keberakhiran) justru menyumbangkan rasio tersendiri bagi proses sublimasi Eros, yakni kesadaran bahwa segala sesuatu memiliki akhir.

Dengan demikian saat manusia menyadari bahwa Eros adalah konsep yang impermanen, dan keberterimaan terhadap aspek Thanatos sebagai bagian dari kehidupan, Manusia justru terbebaskan dari belunggu represi, karena ia dapat menghadapi dorongan Eros dalam kerangka yang penuh kesadaran akan impermanensi.

Keberkaitan antara Eros dan Tanathos ini tampaknya disadari pula oleh Carine. Karenanya citra-citra Tanathos milik Carine yang terwakili oleh simbol tengkorak, tak lantas tampil polos apa adanya sebagai tengkorak semata. Tengkorak yang hadir baik di atas kanvas maupun yang tampil dalam bentuk karya tiga dimensi milik Carine senantiasa dihiasi (adorned) dengan pernik-pernik seperti bunga teratai ataupun headdress yang penuh warna.

Seri karya Adorned Vanities misalnya yang menampilkan lukisan-lukisan tengkorak dengan dihiasi berbagai bentuk headdress tradisional Indonesia dan mahkota bunga teratai, seolah menunjukkan apresiasi Carine terhadap konsep impermanensi. Jika kita selami lebih dalam, kematian dan perpisahan memang justru merupakan konsep yang semestinya mendorong kita untuk lebih menghargai keterbatasan hidup. Kematian pada karya Carine bukanlah duka yang disesali kedatangannya, namun justru bagian kehidupan yang dirayakan. Sebuah parting gift akan singkatnya dan berharganya setiap bentuk kehidupan.

Sublimasi terhadap Thanatos sesungguhnya sering kita temui dalam keseharian, seperti misalnya pada requiem (musik kematian), ritual pemakaman ataupun puisi-puisi bertemakan kematian dan perpisahan. Tanathos versi Carine hadir dalam kontras antara simbol tengkorak yang ia hadirkan secara puitis dan feminin. Karya instalasi Carine yang menampilkan tiga boks kaca berisi tengkorak besar berwarna emas misalnya. Karya yang menghadirkan logika sekuens ini, dengan gamblang berkisah mengenai bagaimana kematian mengabsorpsi kehidupan: dari berada menjadi tiada.

Boks pertama menunjukkan satu tengkorak berhiaskan bunga lotus di atas kepalanya tampak terduduk tegak di atas permukaan emas. Permukaan emas yang bagai lumpur hisap ini perlahan menenggelamkan tengkorak, seperti yang bisa disimak pada kotak kaca kedua, saat keutuhan tengkorak dimakan oleh ketertenggelaman dirinya dalam "lumpur" emas di bawahnya. Di kotak ketiga kita melihat bunga teratai yang semula hinggap di atas tengkorak mengambang di atas permukaan lumpur emas. Agaknya Carine menyampaikan suatu pesan bahwa kematian justru memberikan kesempatan untuk kelahiran baru.

Kehadiran Eros dan Tanathos yang sangat kontras hadir terutama dalam karya Carine yang paling masif di pameran ini. Karya instalasi yang menampilkan objek phalus berwarna hitam di tengah lingkaran puluhan tengkorak putih berhiaskan bunga teratai ini dikomposisikan di ruang galeri utama dengan dilatarbelakangi tirai merah marun. Karya ini seolah merupakan titik ultimasi Carine dalam mengejawantahkan konsepsi Eros dan Tanathos dalam pameran ini. Phalus yang diletakkan tepat di tengah komposisi karya menjadi representasi hasrat yang diidamkan. Sedangkan tengkorak-tengkorak yang melingkarinya seolah menjadi pengingat bahwa dorongan kematian akan senantiasa hadir memutus rantai hasrat yang berangkaian sepanjang hidup manusia.

"Embodied" sebagai judul pameran yang Carine pilih, bisa diartikan sebagai pengejawantahan (:embodiment) atau personifikasi konsepsi Eros dan Tanathos melalui karya-karyanya. Seni sendiri sebagai embodiment kebudayaan manusia menurut Marcuse bukanlah domain logos dan rasionalitas, dan justru merupakan salah satu pengjawantahan hasrat Eros (sensuousness) dalam tataran yang lebih tinggi:

"The basic experience in this dimension is sensuous rather than conceptual; the aesthetic perception is essentially intuition, not notion... it is by virtue of its intrinsic relation to sensuousness that the aesthetic function assumes its central position. The aesthetic perception is accompanied by pleasure."

"Embodied" dengan demikian dapat dimaknai juga sebagai pengejawantahan hasrat-hasrat seorang Carine saat ia mahsyuk dalam penjelajahan artistik dan estetikanya dalam berkarya. Sapuan pigmen yang ekspresif dan penuh daya hidup dalam lukisan-lukisan Carine adalah salah satu bukti betapa ia mengutamakan sensuousness kala berkarya.

Penggunaan throwel berukuran besar alih-alih kuas, menunjukkan bahwa Carine meletakkan aspek emosi dan ekspresi sebagai bagian penting dalam berkarya. Carine juga tampaknya menggunakan throwel ini sebagai penanda maskulinitas, karena sapuan cat yang dihasilkan pun tampak tegas dan jauh dari keraguan. Selain itu, sebagai aktivitas yang telah lama Carine geluti, melukis agaknya menjadi sebuah upaya “pelepasan” atau eksternalisasi dari dalam hatinya. Karenanya Carine tak terlampaui acuh dengan sejarah dan wacana mengenai seni lukis sebagai sebuah diskursus. Bisa jadi ia lebih mengutamakan fungsi katarsis melukis daripada bersusah payah menjelajahi historisitas dan ontologi seni lukis itu sendiri.

Selain tak terlampaui acuh dengan persoalan historisitas medium, Carine juga tak terlampaui tertarik dengan pewacanaan karya seni yang biasanya menyoroti isu-isu besar. Hal ini bisa dilihat dari sikap tak acuh Carine terhadap isu feminisme. Padahal akan sangat mudah mengkorelasikan strategi berkarya Carine dengan persoalan gender. Alih-alih berperan sebagai kontingen kebudayaan yang kritis terhadap kondisi bias antara maskulinitas dan femininitas, Carine justru tak terlampaui ambil peduli dan lebih memfokuskan diri terhadap penelusuran estetis dirinya dalam menanggapi konsepsi Eros dan Thanatos. Namun demikian, melalui pengoperasian simbol phalus, Carine—disadari atau tidak—sedikit banyak berhasil mengukuhkan otonomi perempuan sebagai subjek aktif saat menghadapi suatu objek hasrat (desirable object). Phalus di tangan Carine menjadi oposan bagi logika penis envy Freudian, karena ia hadir justru sebagai objek yang memicu impuls Eros dalam diri Carine sebagai subjek yang menghendaki—alih-alih objek yang cemburu terhadap subjektivitas lelaki seperti yang seringkali dicetuskan dalam psikoanalisa Freudian.

Karena itu imaji-imaji phalus yang hadir dalam karya-karya Carine pun tampak sublim dan dipenuhi aura feminin, karena seperti demikianlah Carine memaknai objek hasratnya tersebut. Karena itu meskipun Carine secara sadar tak menjadikan karyanya sebagai teks yang berpihak pada isu feminisme, namun secara otomatis karya-karyanya menjadi cukup penting bagi wacana feminisme. Karena Carine hadir sebagai model ideal sebagai perempuan yang berkuasa penuh terhadap subjektivitas dirinya sendiri.

Di luar kesemua isu yang mungkin lekat secara langsung dan tak langsung, karya-karya Carine menghadirkan angin segar dalam aktivitas seni rupa Indonesia belakangan. Ada semacam semangat romantisme gaya baru sekaligus optimisme dalam memandang kehidupan secara generik. Padahal jika kita tengok lagi simbol-simbol yang Carine usung lebih sering kita kenal sebagai ikon pesimisme dan nihilisme. Ini, ditambah lagi dengan kenyataan bahwa Carine berkesenian dalam tataran personal, justru menyadarkan kita bahwa kehidupan yang sublim dan membebaskan, dapat terbentuk melalui sikap bersahabat dan kompromis terhadap berbagai substansi kehidupan; baik yang dianggap positif maupun negatif.

**Asmudjo Jono Irianto
Dinni Tresnadewi Nurfallah**





Nature versus culture is a binary opposition that has been in constant debate throughout human civilizations. Are the things that occur naturally the most important and fundamental to humankind? Or, should things cultural and things that formulate an ordered and civilized life be the essence of being human? As animal rationabile, humankind has the ability to surpass its animalistic urges and install itself as the most advanced species on earth. Yet, part of humanity retains its animal attributes that have their own mechanisms which cannot be fully controlled by human rationale. These attributes manifest themselves in the form of desire, an integral urge within each person's self that always exists and that will influence a person's choices from the day of her birth to the end of her life.

Desires vary: the desire for power, for wealth, or for the ability to profoundly influence other people, etc. All of these desires stem from the simplest of desires/motivations: a wish to experience pleasure and to avoid either pain or displeasure. Sigmund Freud—a pioneering figure who had extensively/significantly explored the concept of desire—further believed that these human desires stem from an inherent sexual urge within each person. This is an animalistic attribute that occurs autonomously, separate from the consciousness of human as rational beings.

According to Freud, human civilizations [often] repress desires, instincts and sexual urges because they are considered as agents of chaos. Further, Freud stated that the history of humankind is a history of self-repression [1]. Civilizations exist thanks to humanity's attempt to repress all forms of urges and desires that may interfere with individual agency (interests). In his daring essay, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle", Freud explains that humanity has developed a kind of self-preservation method otherwise known as reality principle, which is used to suppress desire, so as not to place the Self in jeopardy, or in conditions that may lead to jeopardy. In the end, both of them work in a circular way, where reality principle will try to postpone the fulfillment of desire, to repress the flow of human life; while, on the other hand, desire will demand continuous gratification. Such is the eternal struggle between order (cosmos) and disorder (chaos).

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The sublimity of CARINE LEROY-BRAHAM's Eros and Thanatos

*"Women and the Universal!
Very interesting; one kind of giggles
because women have always been confined
to the realm of the Personal."*

—Tring T. Minh-Ha

Throughout human history, orders and rules are constructed to organize civilizations. Religions, myths, science, and law have become instruments to ensure that each individual within society act according to orders and rules. Humankind's obsession with order has led to a disproportionate adherence to Logos than to Eros [2]. Logos—simply put: rationale, logic, thought, resilience, and determination—is considered as the foundation of human civilization. Eros—a symbol of freedom, creativity, vitality, but also fatality—is considered as the opposite of Logos; it is often considered as wild, uncontrollable, feminine, and foreign, and as such must be repressed. Take for instance, the Ancient Greek mythic figures of Orpheus, Narcissus and Dionysus, often considered as examples of Eros-oriented figures. They are never truly considered as canonical symbols of civilizations; they are even described as embodiments of antipathy. On the other hand, Prometheus, Hercules, and Odysseus, symbolizing thought (cunning), sacrifice, and eternal pain, are considered as heroic figures worthy of praise.

The question regarding desire as an inseparable part of being human, is interesting to Carine Leroy-Braham. Through the exhibition, Embodied, this French artist has conveyed/manifested the two fundamental but oppositional urges within a harmonious and complementary configuration. Using phallic and skull imageries, Carine presents the concepts of Eros and Thanatos in works that, despite their paradoxical nature, are still harmoniously integrated. The skulls are certainly shrouded in an aura of death and finiteness, but they are combined with ornaments full of color and vitality. A phallic monolith, rising up haughtily as a symbol of masculinity, is surrounded by feminine and elegant white skulls.

Carine sees the concept of Eros and Thanatos, as developed by Freud, as having symbolic potential, which in addition to its potential for conceptual development, can also be manifested artistically in the form of works created using a variety of medium and materials. Eros is construed as survival instincts, often manifested in the desire for happiness, enjoyment, love and sexuality, presented here through phallic objects and sometimes lotus flowers. On the other hand, Thanatos represents an instinct or desire for death and static existence, often shown through hopelessness and self-destruction—said to be manifested in the form of aggression, destruction, and an overwhelming desire to/for control; here, these themes are presented in the form of skulls.

Unlike Carl Gustav Jung's oppositional Eros/Logos, Freud's Thanatos and Eros are seen as fundamental human properties that must both be repressed as they are agents of chaos. However, through Embodied, Carine tries to communicate a different viewpoint. Look at Carine's paintings that are expressive and vital—as though scoffing at the various patterns of cultural oppression imposed upon sexuality and death. Further, Carine's three-dimensional and installation works clearly communicate her unbridled celebrations of sexuality and death.

Carine has adopted a stance that is more or less similar to that held by Herbert Marcuse. This German thinker conveyed his critique of Freud's Eros/Thanatos concept by stating that these two human urges actually have the potential to create a balance within industrial societies, especially those that have been entirely saturated in capitalism's mechanical patterns. Marcuse believes that Eros can be sublimated, that is, turning an animalistic desire for constant sexual gratification into rational desire. When in the past human rationale was used as an instrument to build a mechanical and robotic society, even repressing Eros in the process, now, with openness and further understanding of sexuality itself, humankind will be able to move toward a more sublime state of rationality with regards to their sexuality, thus removing the need to repress Eros.

"Under non-repressive conditions, sexuality tends to 'grow into' Eros – that is to say, toward self-sublimation in lasting and expanding relations (including work relations) which serve to intensify and enlarge instinctual gratification. Eros strive for 'eternalizing' itself in permanent order." [3]

"Eros redefines reason on his own terms. Reasonable is what sustains the order of gratification." [4]

Looking at Carine's works, we will discover that they embody implicit opinions that are reminiscent of Marcuse's sublimation of Eros. One of her works in Embodied is a three-dimensional phallic monolith, deliberately colored in silver. It is easy for the audience to fall into the 'trap' of regarding this work as Carine's criticism of masculine supremacy [over the feminine]. However, rather than as an object of criticism, Carine has positioned it as an object of her desire. The silver color that coats the entirety of the work itself, alongside it being erected on a stone pedestal, further indicates that the object is valuable in Carine's eyes. Carine Leroy-Braham has sublimated the phallus into an aesthetic exploration, instead of treating it as a mere biological instrument whose mechanism for gratification must be repressed.

Delving further into the concept of gratification, with regards to Eros, Herbert Marcuse expounds that gratification is strongly connected to the pleasure principle. When Eros (sexual desire) demands to be fulfilled, it encounters the presence of time and the logic of finiteness as its greatest obstacles. Because timelessness is the ideal sort of pleasure [5], then the existence of death is a very real obstacle to the gratification of Eros. Within reality principle, it is understood that despite being bound to culture, Eros still can't avoid death or finiteness. As such, Thanatos (or, the urge to embrace or move toward death or finiteness) can contribute its unique rationale to the sublimation of Eros, that is, an understanding or a consciousness that all things must end. Thus, once humankind is able to understand Eros as an impermanent concept, and accept Thanatos as part of life, then humankind will be able to free themselves from repression—because at this point, people will be able to face Eros with the fullness of consciousness regarding impermanence.

Carine understands this sort of link connecting Eros and Thanatos. As such, Carine's Thanatos imageries, in the form of skulls and skull symbolisms, do not appear plainly. The skulls in both her canvases and her three-dimensional works are adorned and embellished with lotus flowers or even colorful headdresses. The Adorned Vanities series for instance are paintings of skulls adorned with various forms of Indonesian traditional headdresses as well as lotus flowers; they are as though representations of Carine's appreciation of impermanence as a concept. Looking further, we will find that 'death' and 'parting' are concepts that should really inspire us to appreciate the finiteness of life. In Carine's works, death is not something to be regretted (to feel sorry about), but part of life that must be celebrated. A parting gift for us to reflect this short but valuable life.

The sublimation of Thanatos is actually common in daily life, such as in requiem music, burial rituals, dirges or elegies (poems written with death and parting as a theme). Carine's Thanatos presents a contrasting reality in the skulls that are presented poetically and exuding femininity. Carine's installation work, for instance, presents three glass boxes holding large golden skulls. A sequential triptych, the work plainly describes how death absorbs life, showing the path from existence to non-existence. The first box shows a lotus-crowned skull placed upright on a golden surface. The surface seems like a layer of golden quicksand that will drag the skull underneath, as seen in the second box, where the skull is slowly drowning inside this golden "quicksand". In the third box, we see that only the lotus flower is left floating on that golden surface. Perhaps, Carine is trying to convey the message that death is actually an opportunity for new life.

The contrasting presence of Eros and Thanatos is perhaps most striking in Carine's most massive piece exhibited here. The work in question is a black phallus surrounded by dozens of lotus-adorned white skulls, located in the main gallery space against a maroon backdrop. The work seems to represent the apex of Carine's conceptual approach of Eros and Thanatos in this exhibition. The centrally-positioned phallus has become a representation of her desires. Meanwhile, the surrounding skeletons seem to serve as reminders of death's constant presence, which can threaten to sever the chain of desires that weaves itself around human life.

Perhaps, Carine has chosen Embodied as the title of her exhibition to convey her view of the embodiment or personification of Eros and Thanatos in her works. Art itself, as the embodiment of human civilization is, according to Marcuse, not the domain of Logos and rationality, but actually the manifestation of Eros (sensuousness) on a much greater level:

"The basic experience in this dimension is sensuous rather than conceptual; the aesthetic perception is essentially intuition, not notion... it is by virtue of its intrinsic relation to sensuousness that the aesthetic function assumes its central position. The aesthetic perception is accompanied by pleasure." [6]

As such Embodied, can be construed as the manifestations of Carine's desires as she immerses herself within her aesthetic and artistic explorations. Expressive brushes of pigments become an example of how she values sensuousness very highly in her creative work. The use of large trowels instead of paintbrushes shows how Carine places emotions and expressions as an important part of her work. Carine also uses the trowel to convey a sense of masculinity, because the strokes appear decisive and far from ambivalent. Moreover, as something she has been working with for quite a long while now, painting is something of a 'release' or an externalization of the things that reside in her heart. And as such she is not too preoccupied with the history and dialogs of the art of painting as discourse. It may be that she has prioritized painting's cathartic function over its historicity or ontology.

In addition to not being too preoccupied with the historicity of her medium, Carine is also not too interested in the usual discourses involving art and major (social) issues. This can be seen, for instance, in the casual concern that she has over the weightier debates surrounding feminism. This is despite the relative ease in which Carine can adjust her creative strategies to fit into gender-discussions. However, rather than becoming part of a cultural contingent that looks critically at the bias between masculinity and femininity, Carine has chosen to not be overly-concerned with such issues. Instead, she focuses herself on an almost inward-oriented aesthetic exploration to respond to the concept of Eros and Thanatos. And yet, by using phallic imageries, Carine has—consciously or otherwise—managed to position female agency/autonomy as an active subject responding to an object of desire. Carine has positioned the phallus as opposition to Freudian penis envy, because here it is presented as an object that triggers Eros-impulses within herself, rather than as an object that represents female envy of male subjecthood (as often proposed by Freudian psychoanalysis). As such, Carine’s phallic imageries appear sublime and swathed in a feminine aura; this is how Carine interprets, or construes, her object of desire. And so even though Carine does not consciously intend her works to discuss feminist issues, her works are also quite important to the overall feminist discourse. Carine is the ideal image of a woman with full authority and autonomy over her own subjecthood.

Outside all the immediate and secondary issues, Carine’s works are fresh offerings in the current Indonesian art landscape. There’s perhaps a sense of a novel romantic spirit and a kind of optimism that looks at life in an almost generic way. Especially since the symbolisms used in Carine’s works are more often seen or understood as icons or representations of pessimism and nihilism. Add to this is the fact that she works on a personal level, further leading us to an understanding of a freeing and sublime life; a life that can be forged/achieved if we approach the various substances of life—both negative and positive—with openness and compromise.

Footnotes:

[1] Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), pg. 11

[2] Here, the oppositionality between Logos and Eros is loosely based on Carl Jung’s theory found in “Aspects of the Feminine”.

[3] Marcuse, 222

[4] Marcuse, 224

[5] Marcuse, 231

[6] Marcuse, 176





CARINE LEROY-BRAHAM

01/04/1972 - France

www.carineleroybraham.com

Title of the exhibition

EMBODIED

Paintings and sculptures

ADORNED
VANITIES



LOTUS VANITY
gouache on papers 57x77 cm



ORCHID CROWN VANITY
gouache on papers 57x77 cm

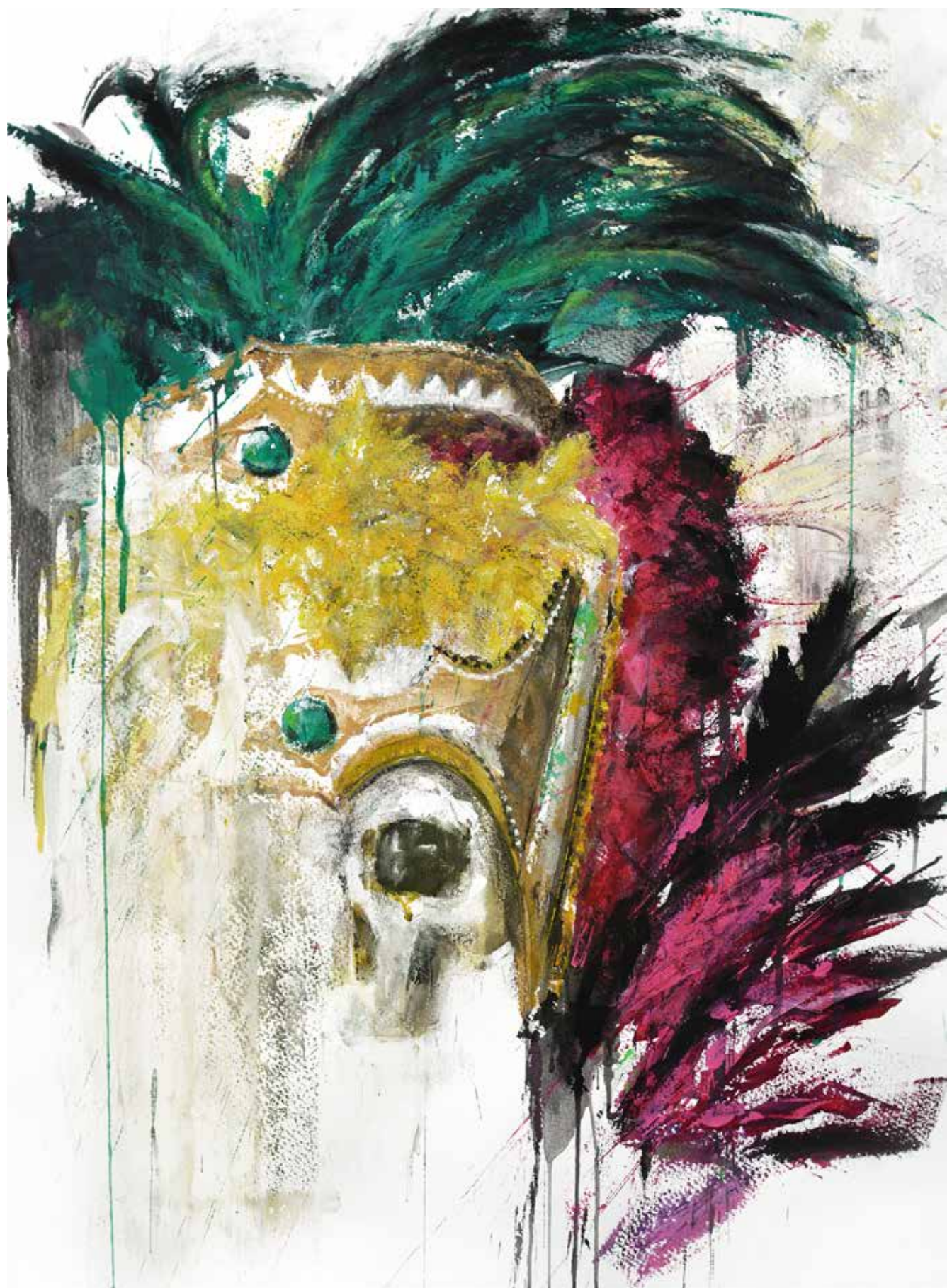
INDONESIAN VANITIES



INDONESIAN VANITIES
gouache on papers 57x77 cm



INDONESIAN VANITIES
gouache on papers 57x77 cm



INDONESIAN VANITIES
gouache on papers 57x77 cm



INDONESIAN VANITIES
BALINESE DANCER
gouache on canvas 200x200 cm





INDONESIAN VANITIES
JAVA WEDDING
gouache on canvas 200x200 cm

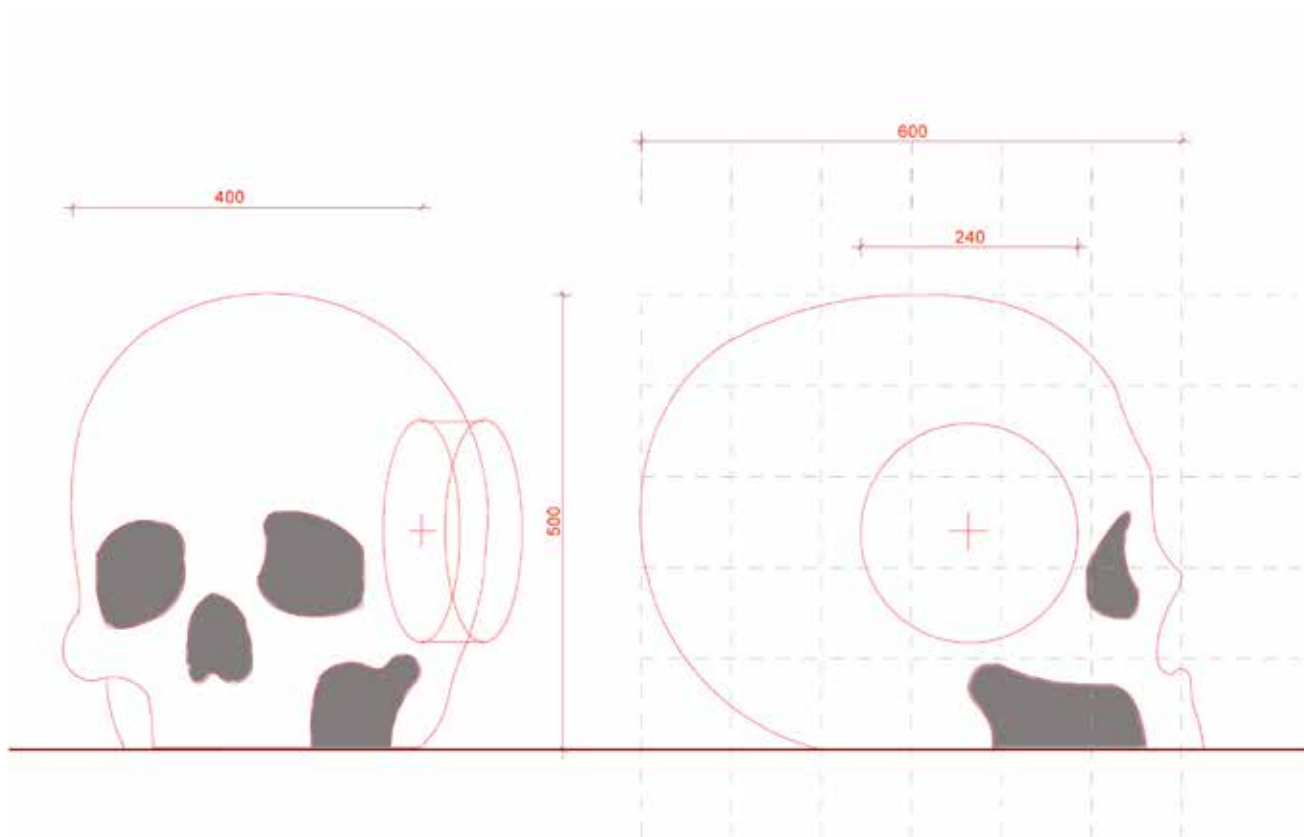




INDONESIAN VANITIES
JOGJA DANCER
gouache on canvas 200x200 cm







LOTUS VANITY





preliminary studies, sketches
and casting process







LOTUS VANITY
triptic in aluminium and series in
white stones











EROS

THANATOS

(DES)ILLUSIONS

In this installation, Carine Leroy-Braham creates her project « Embodied » to encompass from painting to sculpture, opening new fields for reflection that can deepen our way of interpreting what we see/experience.

From a purely Western perspective, her painting provides us with a view of the male genitalia as nature intended, without its erotic dimension. Stripped from its body, this sex organ is an object that symbolizes both strength and weakness. Is this organ, semi-erect and full of blood, a symbol of strength and masculinity? Or is it depicted in its post-coital stage, heading toward rest after transmitting life? The ambiguity and strength of Carine Leroy-Braham's painting lets the audience make their own interpretation of the cycle of life.

In an Asian context, its relations to the lingam—itsself often made from carved stone—is immediately identifiable. In the Hindu religion, the phallic lingam represents the god Shiva and symbolizes energy and masculinity in its relations to the divine. Ascetic it may be, but it is the main figure or form of Tantra. Always upright and rigid, quickly associated with masculinity, retaining a creative quality, the lingam is also associated with the goddess Shakti and her feminine energy. This is also a message that Carine Leroy-Braham wishes to convey; this work draws its energy from the universal creator, a reproductive strength from nature that bypasses gender paradox.

Beyond the immediate interpretation of this work and the scenography, which can be compared to a theater of tragedy (with actors positioned thusly on the stage, with a purple backdrop), her work also highlights an attempt to find a method of interpretation from within our impulses, a charged energy that softens our physical apparatus, which can help us reach a place where the audience has the autonomy to explore things on their own. Here, then, is Carine Leroy-Braham's artistic proposal: of how she is inspired by symbols that are interpreted differently in different cultures from different parts of the world. In actuality, her reflection, despite its entire spiritual capacity, cannot be translated/interpreted through a religious viewpoint. Instead, her work touches on the advantage of equality/equity/balance—between action and rest, the strength and weakness of life and death—and further strengthened by the work's elliptical form, reminiscent of the universe itself.

Both forms of spirituality come together in an installation that is a synthesis of two series of works, also presented here, « Adorned Vanities » and « Eros et Thanatos ». These two series of works complemented the sculpture by sending a universal message.

The sculpture, with its oblong shape standing upright on a circular plate mounted on a base or pedestal, appears like a new idol being worshipped by petrified white human skulls with empty eye sockets. The stiff red curtain provides an apocalyptic ambience to the scene, imbuing it with a feminine touch. It is easy, and indeed tempting, to draw a parallel between this presentation and the painting « L'origine de la Guerre » (1989) by the painter Orlan, which in turn was inspired by Gustave Courbet's « L'origine du Monde » (1866). If « Memento Mori » reminds the mortal and vain humans of worldly things and activities, then the artist tend to question our awareness of time, 'Is it not too late?' Is the person, and his or her own ideological reasoning(s), the architect of his or her own downfall? If we see it as a symbol of arrogance and all things phallic, then the sculpture in the center can perhaps also remind us of 'Little Boy', a bomb or a weapon of destruction wrought by our own human hands. Seventy years after the tragedy of Hiroshima that claimed millions of innocent lives, where are we now? We always vascillate between life and death. Carine Leroy-Braham invites us back onto the path of reality by reminding us that the apocalypse is purely a human construction.

Carine's work is such that it invites us to reflect, but without blatantly leading us onto one particular path. And so, the lingam can be interpreted in many different ways—as a weapon, as the masculine sex organ, or perhaps as a cocoon that harbors life. Carine allows the audience to come to their own interpretation or draw their own conclusion, by deliberately refraining from giving the key (direct access) to imagination.

This is the heart of Carine Leroy-Braham's works: a duality that never stops questioning what it is that makes us vacillate between Eros and Thanatos, between the ambivalent impulses of life and death, the beginning of something... unless this is the end of something else entirely? 'Eternity', in some cases (or in this particular case), cannot be seen as a symbol of immortality. This is the theme of a spirituality, scrutinized and questioned in a search for meaning; which is exactly what the artist is asking through her works.

Edouard Mornaud, August 2015

(DES)ILLUSIONS

Dalam instalasi ini, Carine Leroy-Braham membuat proyeknya « Embodied » dari lukisan hingga seni pahat, dan membuka bidang baru dari refleksi yang memperdalam cara interpretasi.

Dari titik pandang barat yang sesungguhnya/murni, karya lukis ini memberi kita sebuah pandangan terhadap organ seks lelaki terbuat dari darah dan daging, tanpa dimensi erotisnya. Terlepas dari tubuhnya, organ seks menjadi objek simbolik dari kekuatan dan kelemahan. Apakah organ seks dalam keadaan semi ereksi yang penuh dengan darah ini sebagai penanda kekuatan dan kejantanan, ataukah hal tersebut hadir sendiri sesaat setelah aksi seksual, menjelang/ menuju keadaan istirahat setelah menyalurkan/menyampaikan/mentransfer kehidupan.

Semua ambiguitas dan kekuatan lukisan dari Carine Leroy-Braham inilah yang memperkenankan/membebasakan kepada para pengunjung untuk mempertanyakan tentang siklus kehidupan.

Dalam konteks Asia, hubungan dengan lingga, yang sering berbentuk batu ukir berdiri langsung bisa teridentifikasi. Tampilan phallic pada lingga dalam agama Hindu merepresentasikan Shiva dan melambangkan energi dan kekuatan maskulin/ lelaki dengan hubungannya kepada tuhan. Astetis, namun merupakan sosok utama pula dalam tantrisme. Selalu berdiri tegak dan cepat/segera terasosiasikan dengan maskulinitas dan berpotensi sebagai pencipta, lingga ini juga berasosiasi terhadap dewi Shakti dan terhadap energi femininnya. Hal ini pula yang menjadi pesan dari Carine Leroy-Braham, karya ini menarik energi dari kreator universal, kekuatan reproduksi dari alam, dengan melewati paradoks gender.

Di luar interpretasi langsung dari karya dan scenography yang dapat kita bandingkan dengan pementasan teater tragedi (pemerannya di atas panggung dalam posisi tertentu yang terdistribusi, dengan tirai berwarna ungu), karya beliau juga mengangkat sebuah pencarian interpretasi dari impuls kita, muatan energi yang melembutkan aparatus fisik untuk mencapai sebuah tujuan yang dapat dieksplorasi sendiri oleh para pengunjung. Usulan artistik dari Carine Leroy-Braham adalah apakah beliau terinspirasi dari simbol sama namun diinterpretasikan secara berbeda pada budaya lain yang berada di belahan bumi yang berbeda. Pada kenyataannya, refleksi beliau dengan seluruh spiritualitas yang beliau ketahui tidak mengubah susunan/dapat diterjemahkan dengan agama. Karyanya bercerita tentang kelebihan dari ekuilibrium kekuatan antara aksi dan istirahat, kekuatan dan kelemahan dari kehidupan dan kematian, yang terbantu dengan bentuk elips, seperti halnya dunia.

Kedua bentuk spiritualitas ini tergabung dalam instalasi yang merupakan sintesis/sintesa dari dua seri yang disajikan « Adornes Vanities » dan « Eros et Thanatos » yang tergabung dan saling melengkapi dalam bidang seni pahat sambil mengirimkan pesan universal.

Bentuk melonjong tegak lurus di tengah piringan bundar ditampilkan di atas dudukan, seperti dewa/tuhan baru yang disembah oleh tengkorak putih yang ketakutan dengan soket mata yang kosong. Tirai merah kencang/ketat memberi aksen suasana/ambience apokaliptik dalam adegan/panggung dengan membawa sentuhan feminin. Hal ini demikian mudah dan menggoda untuk dipararelkan dengan lukisan « L'origine de la Guerre » (1989) oleh pelukis Orlan, beliau sendiri terinspirasi dari lukisan Gustave Courbet « L'origine du Monde » (1866). Jika « Memento Mori » mengingatkan kepada manusia yang mortal dan sombong akan aktivitas dan hal duniawi, seniman cenderung mempertanyakan pengetahuan/kesadaran tentang 'apakah belum terlambat?' Apakah manusia dengan alasan ideologinya menyebabkan kerugiannya sendiri? Jika dapat dirasakan sebagai lambang phallic dan kesombongan, patung di tengah ini dapat juga mengingatkan kita dengan bentuk bom, senjata kehancuran yang dibuat dari tangan manusia, yaitu « Little Boy ». Tujuh puluh tahun setelah tragedi Hiroshima yang memakan jutaan nyawa orang tidak bersalah, bagaimana dengan sekarang? Kita selalu sangsi antara kehidupan dan kematian. Carine Leroy-Braham mengajak kita menuju jalur realitas dengan mengingatkan kita bahwa apokalips adalah derivasi manusia belaka.

Karya dari seniman ini adalah mengundang kita menuju lintasan refleksi tanpa memandu/menggiring terhadap suatu cara tertentu/ yang presisi/spesifik. Maka, lingga ini dapat dimengerti sebagai sebuah senjata, organ seks lelaki/lelaki dan juga kepompong yang menyebarkan/menghidupi kehidupan. Seniman memberikan pilihan kepada para pengunjung untuk menemukan interpretasi masing-masing dengan memilih untuk tidak menyampaikan kunci bacaan yang terbuka dalam imajinasi.

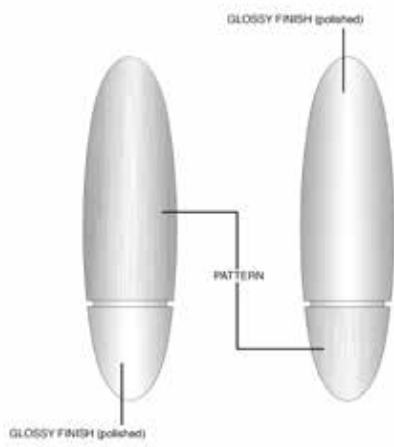
Inilah jantung/pusat dalam karya Carine Leroy-Braham, dualitas tanpa berhenti mempertanyakan yang dapat membuat kita bimbang antara Eros dan Thanatos, antara impuls ambivalens dari kehidupan dan kematian, awal dari sesuatu, atau kecuali ini adalah akhir dari sesuatu yang lain? Keabadian dalam hal tertentu tidak dapat dilihat sebagai simbol imortalitas. Inilah sebenarnya tema dari spiritualitas yang dilihat dan dipertanyakan sebagai pencarian dari sebuah makna, seperti yang dipertanyakan oleh seniman.



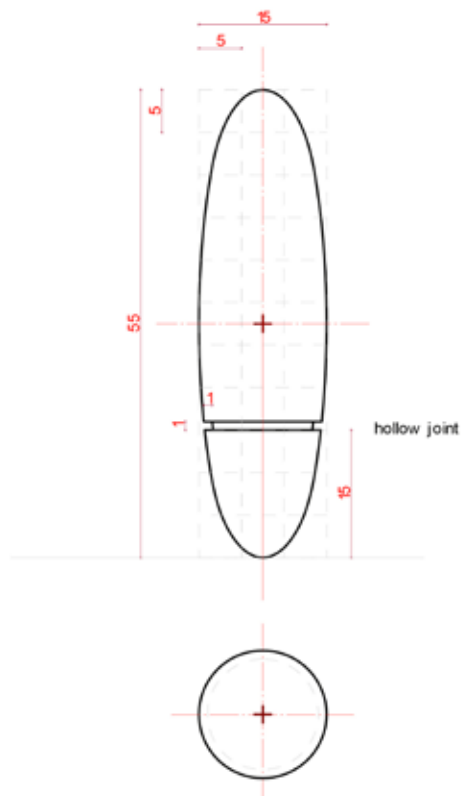
EROS & THANATOS
gouache on canvas 55x77 cm



EROS & THANATOS
gouache on canvas 55x77 cm



GRID OF PROPORTION

















CV ARTIST

EXHIBITIONS

- 2015 Solo exhibition / August-September / Lawangwangi Creative Space, Bandung - Indonesia
Solo exhibition / June-September / Domaine de l'Olivette - winery real estate, Bandol Provence - France
- 2014 Solo exhibition / October-November / Eva Doublet Gallery, Surgères - France
Solo exhibition / September / «Opacity & Transparency» Holcim Ltd, Grand Port La Rochelle - France
Group exhibition / July-August / Unstandart Gallery, Ré Island – France
- 2013 Group exhibition / September / Heritage Day programme, XVIIIth Century Hotel particulier, La Rochelle - France
Solo exhibition / July-August / «Silos» Chapelle des Dames Blanches, Mairie of La Rochelle - France
- 2012 Solo exhibition / November-December / «Chantier» (Construction site) Steel Diffusion Showroom, La Rochelle - France

RESIDENCIES

- 2015 Lawangwangi Creative Space, Bandung Indonesia / July-August / residency - exhibition with the support of the convention City of La Rochelle - Institut Français and Centre Intermondes
- 2013 Domaine de l'Olivette, Winery real estate Bandol Provence - France / August

COMMISSION WORKS

- 2015 Photographic documentary works, Holcim Construction Site of Bayel / Production of a limited 25 caskets edition of 15 photos - photos large format
- 2014 Series of works around wine production for Domaine de l'Olivette
- 2013 Painting on canvas and photographic documentary works, Holcim Construction Site of La Rochelle / Production of a limited 20 caskets edition of 15 photos

PUBLICATIONS - PRESS & CATALOGUES

- 2015 July / Var Matin Daily « The work of Carine Leroy-Braham exhibited at Domaine de l'Olivette »
June / La Rochelle Monthly « In Asia and here »
March / 25 caskets of 15 photos limited edition , numbered and signed
- 2014 October / Artes Online interview <https://vimeo.com/109683360>
January / 20 caskets of 15 photos limited edition , numbered and signed
- 2013 September / Sud Ouest Daily, National Heritage Day
July-August / La Fée monthly «Portrait»
July / Sud-Ouest daily «The architect's flesh»
July / Arcades bimonthly «Culture and Heritage»
June / City Council newsletter «Urban Expressions»
July / Catalogue «Fleshy Images» for «Silos» exhibition
- 2012 November / Fâmes monthly, portrait of the artist
April / La Rochelle Habitat monthly
April / Ré Island Habitat monthly

COLLECTIONS

Private Collections : La Rochelle, Paris, Marseille, Lille, Nantes, Luxembourg, Lisbonne, Bangkok
Public Collections : City of La Rochelle

CV ARCHITECT

2004 - 2012

Jean-Florian Leroy Architecture Ltd, Ré Island - France

Private villas on the island, construction and renovation, interior design, 3D, Landscape Design (Publications available upon request)

1998 - 2003

Delavaud-Duvigneau Architecture Ltd, public infrastructures

Edition and design of brochures for The Urban and Environment Architecture Council

EDUCATION

1996 - 1997

Degree in Architecture at CNRS - National Scientific Research Center

Thesis : Museology and Museography at Palais des Papes of Avignon –

The use of computer generated image software in heritage preservation

1990 - 1995

National Superior School of Architecture, Marseille Luminy Campus - France

1990 University of Nice, Faculty of Sciences, Bachelor of Science

1989 Baccalauréat in Sciences



Lawangwangi Creative Space

Jl. Dago Giri 99
Warung Caringin, Mekarwangi
Bandung 40391
Indonesia
+62 22 250 4065
+62 22 250 4105

www.artsociates.com
info@artsociates.com

Opening Hours

Tuesday, Thursday & Sunday 11.00-22.00
Friday-Saturday 10.00-23.00
closed every Monday

Group visit of more than 10 by appointment