

TAT
TVAM
ASI THE WORLD IN ONE STUDIO

THAT THOU ART

**TAT
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ASI**

TAT TVAM ASI
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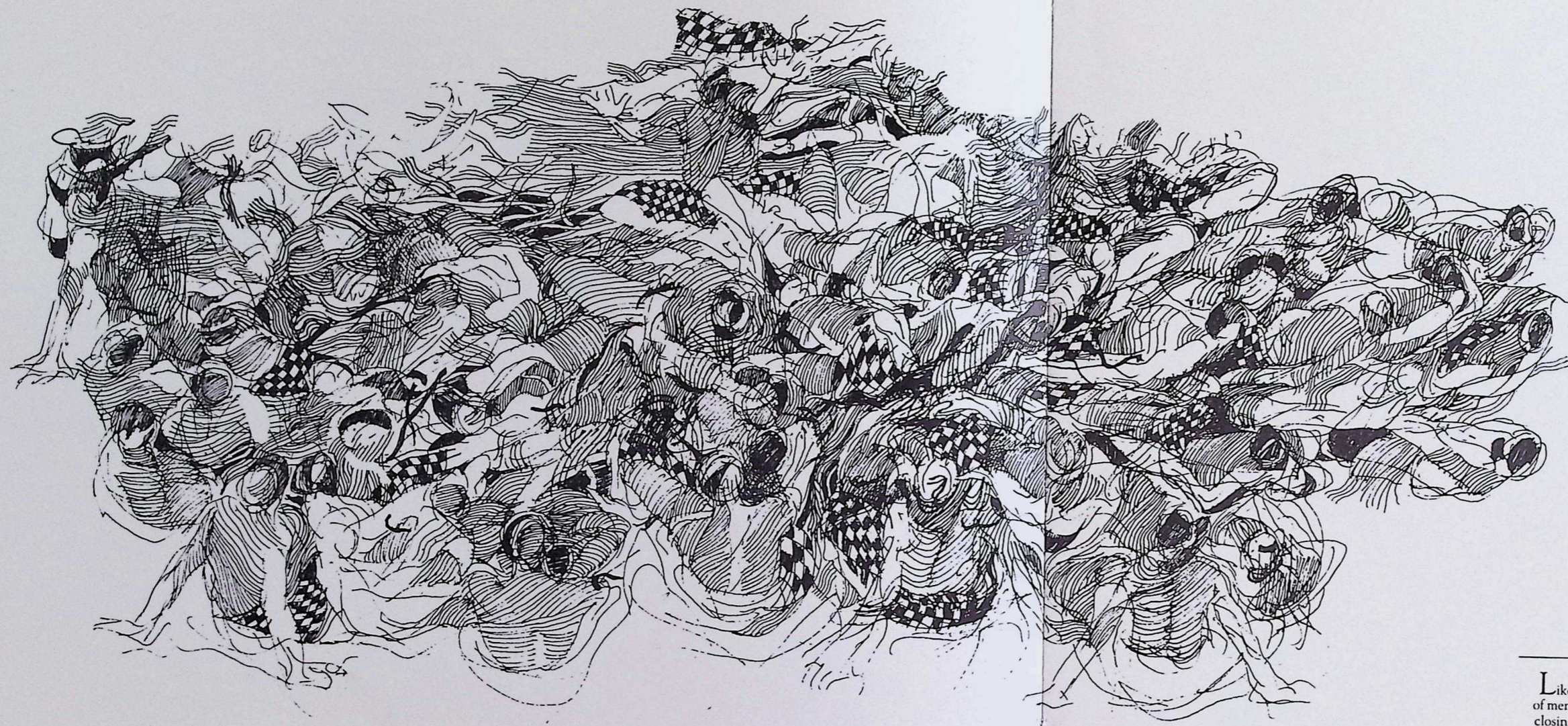
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Eng Tow

TAT TVAM ASI

CLUB MED FIRST ASIAN ARTS FESTIVAL, BALI 1987

TEXT BY CHU LI





Like the *sanghyang*, the *kecak* (left) is a dance of exorcism. Hundreds of men form a circle around a candelabra in the centre, opening and closing the circle as the action demands, and dancing to a chorus of electrifying incantation and sounds. Page 9: Ibrahim Hussein with President Suharto of Indonesia at the official opening of Tat Tvam Asi Gallery, Club Med Bali. In the background is Mr Gilbert Trigano (with glasses), President of the Club Med group.

In glorious joy I sing and dance your shape,
undressing and dressing my own in preparation
to receive you and yours in a painting, a sculpture,
your sculpture, your painting,
set upon your garden green;
And of me, out of me, what can I give to you?
only myself, which is nothing...

Still lying stretched out underneath his cloth sculpture upon
the path of black sand, Chumpon recites another poem – his
own:

Homage to the Balinese People...
...time passed...until the fourth day
the lorry brought the tree
the lorry brought the black sand
the lorry brought the white stone
the workers there together
and I among them
under the sun
on the grass
in Bali
we dug the grass and took it away
we dug the world and took it to the market
in my consciousness I sell something
in my consciousness I take something
in my consciousness I have not given
anything
at all
that is why the tree must come
the white stone must come

*the black sand must come
to be given to the people of Bali...*

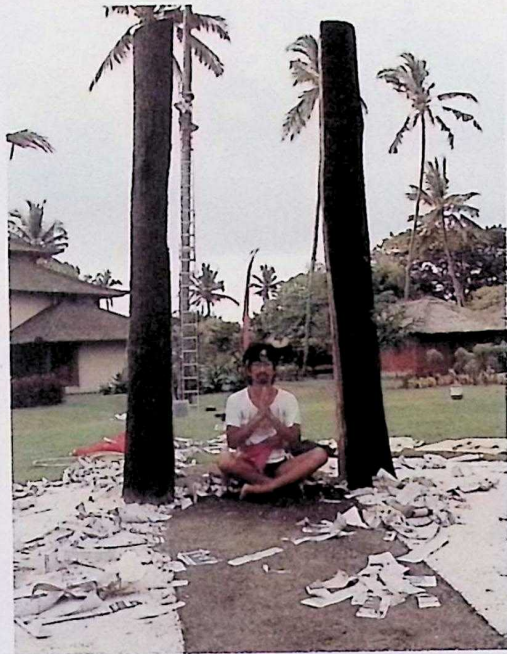
Eventually he gets up, circles the tree trunk, tearing strips of newspaper as he walks round and round, letting the strips of newspaper fall onto the ground in disarray, covering up the white circle around the tree trunk with a blanket of newspaper strips. Then, like in a temple ceremony, he unveils the black and red drapes to expose the two halves of the split trunk which stand naked and bare across a path of black sand, astride two white hemispheres. Chumpon drags the black and red drapes across the green grass and lay them out in parallel rows upon the ground.

The people are stirred, obviously they have never encountered such an art form. Chompon Apisuk, the art communicator, dramatises how the soul of Bali has been stripped bare to its raw fibre by aggressive tourism and intensive media coverage. His presentation is always a kind of demonstration that transcends into art. Chumpon himself confesses he does not know what is going to happen until it actually happens. Like an artist executing a painting on canvas, Chumpon paints into life the events and issues of his time in his performances. The traditional media of art expression no longer enchant him.

For the past two years he has been doing process art. *The Happening* for him is a chain process of building up ideas and concepts, absorbing them, digesting, assessing, creating, and when the time is ripe, he takes on creative leaps by releasing his psyche into manifestations of art happening. The finished product is but momentary; the total gestation becomes more significant and meaningful as an organic process of art. In his work we see multi-media art in Asia going back to their roots in

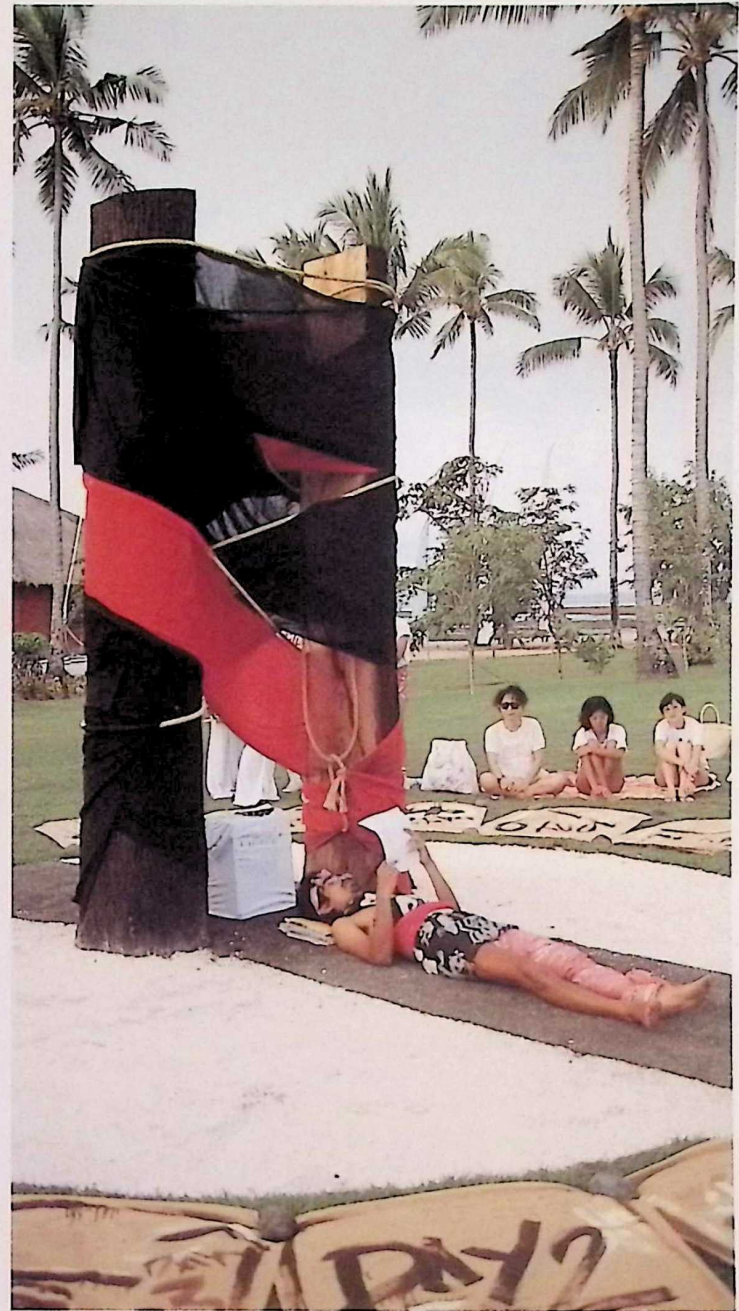


Chumpon Apisuk,
Thailand's multi-media
artist unveils his process-
art creation *Homage to the
Balinese People*





Chumpon Apisuk,
Thai art communicator,
takes a creative leap with
his manifestation of art
happening *Homage to the
Balinese People* as he seeks
to forge a closer link
between art and society.



I had to stop at this point and produce something.

"I think the idea behind this Arts Festival is great. Only Club Med doesn't make sense but we have to live with the world, this world in which money can buy everything. If we don't have this channel I don't know how else we are to meet. We must thank Club Med. They brought us here, and that's something to impress me with! Here I feel I can be very strong and weak at the same time. It's not like you're behind closed doors painting something. You're surrounded by people, buildings, the natural environment, trees, ocean, and you're there doing something within yourself. It is like I'm in a trance.

"When I was lying down listening to the radio, I tried to concentrate up to the point when I told myself, 'Okay I can lie down and read poetry aloud'. I've never done that before. At the same time, there was that mechanical voice there all the time, over your voice, from that radio. You're not sure you'll get over it, your voice will get over that radio's voice! Then there came that moment when I knew I was in control and could do it!"

Chumpon reflects on his *Homage to the Balinese People*. "Yes, it was a challenge. More like a build-up to find the right time and the right moment to do something, to find the inner strength to do it." Chumpon Apisuk etches out a naked imprint of a Thai communicator in red. A red *tung* of Thailand.

Tonight, Made Wianta of Bali shows us slides of his works.

"In my slides, you can see three major influences on my works in my art journey. I've been influenced by my environment – naturally, since I was born in Bali – and by the religion and socio-cultural aspects of the island. In the early days, my parents wanted me to be a dancer so I studied at the KOKAR conservatory of dance and music in Denpasar. Obviously, my

built isn't that of a dancer. So I was sent to the Middle School of Art in Denpasar. At the beginning, I was very ignorant about art. Things changed for me at ASRI Art College, Jogjakarta, one of the main centres for Indonesian cultural development where I studied for four years. I held many group exhibitions there.

"Though I was active, I was not happy with the results of this formal training. I felt I needed further experiences to develop my own style so I left for Belgium where I met other avant garde Indonesian artists. Together, we held art exhibitions. In 1976, at Brussels, I held my first solo. I spent three years in Belgium, travelling widely in Europe, visiting museums and art galleries to study the works of Rembrandt, Leonardo da Vinci, Van Gogh, Picasso – the great masters. In a sense, the museums and art galleries of Europe became my school. I found great inspiration from their works, their different styles and techniques which mark the really good painters from the rest. It was here I found the courage to free my style and develop my own. My European visit, 1975 to 1977, was the second set of influence. The third influence came from my visit to Japan.

"Don't expect to find a representation of traditional Balinese paintings in my works. I'm searching for the universal, something of a world culture, something new. My early works are in batik style, traditional batik colours and Javanese mythological figures, but already a bit more modern than the motif of our traditional painters. As in Balinese traditional art, all lines are rounded; there are no broken lines. I borrowed from the Klungkung style, experimenting with the round shapes and continuous forms of the Klungkung style. Colours are of nature, colours of leaves, soil and earth. I try to explore as many avenues of texture and tone as I can, always looking for the ones

which best express what I'm trying to say at any time."

When he returned from Belgium, Made embarked on a fervent search for his identity and found inspiration in and around the villages of Bali. He walked from village to village seeking out Balinese traditional dance-drama and folk art as rediscovered subject matter for his art. He found his answer in Kamasan, Klungkung, in the house of Nyoman Mandra, the traditional wayang kulit artist. Nyoman Mandra had established a reputable school of traditional Balinese painting in Kamasan. Made was inspired by the master's simple life style and simple attitude towards art. For Nyoman Mandra, drawing is only another necessity of life just like ploughing the padi fields. From Nyoman

Mandra, Made rediscovered his roots and turned to using traditional materials like Chinese ink on paper, pencils, coloured pencils, ball-point pen and ink, leaves and stones, to create his unique style of art.

"These paintings are from *The Nuances From The Orient*, my exhibition in Japan. In 1985, I had the opportunity to represent Indonesia at the Second Asian Art Show, Fukuoka. It was there that I became very interested in the Japanese *Kanji*, believed to have been derived from the Chinese ideograph. It was there that my awareness of the rich treasures of Asian Arts became highly stimulated. I was inspired especially by the designs of the Persian carpets, Indian miniature and Indian art symbols of ancient times. Symbols of my own people in Bali reawakened in me. The sun plays an important role in the life of my people. All these have inspired me to try and capture their fleeting beauty and reflect their essence through the media of my paintings. I hope you have enjoyed taking a look at my works." Made Wianta ends his slide presentation.

When he returned from Europe he was regarded as some-

thing of an avant garde painter who painted in the abstract verging towards surrealism. His style today differs vastly from Western surrealism. He combines all local traditions into his works and is somewhat of an eclectic in terms of materials and subject matter. He has painted on bread wraps, newsprint, cloth and different types of paper, using the techniques of batik as well as the traditional oil of the old masters. His paintings reflect the contemporary mingled with the traditional roots of Bali, somewhat dynamic, spontaneous and of an organic earthy pulse. It is his innermost feelings that Made wishes to convey. He is also deeply concerned that unless artists in Bali remain true to their gifts and paint for the sake of painting rather than for the tourists, the arts in Bali will soon lose the substance in their authentic form.

The lights are switched on. Lat, the cartoonist from Malaysia, takes over the slide projector. Lat, or Mohamed Khalid Nor, also plays the guitar and piano by ear, honky-tonk style. Give him a bow tie and he can croon like 'ole blue eyes (Frank Sinatra). It was actually the editors of Asia Magazine based in Hong Kong, who had discovered Lat's talent when they printed his circumcision collection, *Bersunat*, in 1974. Only then did his employer the Straits Times Group, Malaysia, notice his talent and sponsored a four-month course at St Martin's School of Art, London. In 1977, he embarked on a study tour of the US, sponsored by the US State Secretary.

His first publication depicts Malaysian rural life so warmly and sharply that tourists began to buy the book as a souvenir and his fellow Malaysians began to send it to foreign friends to give them an insight into kampong life in Malaysia. Tonight, Lat shows us slides on this first publication, *The Kampong Boy*, and recaptures for us those funny and nostalgic scenes of

POSTSCRIPT

There were many like him in the Club's village, painting, sculpting, doing their craftsman's job that also is their work of art. Between the artist and the craftsman there is the same difference as between solitude and isolation. Solitude becomes isolation.

I saw Ibrahim Hussein working on a huge canvas. I stopped, I observed him. He did not see me. He was not there. He was in secret communion with his work. I was the passerby, the voyeur, the intruder: my privilege during this meeting of artists. Ibrahim Hussein did not know that I would, in my own way, with lines, blue ink and pages torn from a copy book, draw his portrait with words.

Ibrahim Hussein settled down near a sacred tree. The canvas he was working on was bigger than the sky. Was it its reflection? Was the painting its mirror. Day after day, I saw clouds drifting away, warriors' banners, kites, migrating birds, the sail of our "Belle Poule" puffed up with wind and pride, the ship for all the Americas, for us, westerners, who thought that we were landing in the Indies.

I reacted as a westerner. There is something solar in what Ibrahim Hussein creates. I felt I was grappling with the sky. I felt that this man had the wisdom of an Icarus that would never fall and would succeed in his take off. Behind him I made myself humble, anonymous, observing him. He was not forging a picture. He was plunging into one. He dealt with the surface of the huge canvas as a miniaturist. There was a constant flow in the spontaneity of details, the precision of the tiny strokes; each day the combination made the sky tumble on to earth. The gods were with us close to the sacred tree.

Then I met Ibrahim Hussein. He is unruly, merry and eloquent. He is probably afraid to have to play a social role; or is it, once more, but the impression of a westerner? Nothing desperate (the big balcony of the West is crumbling and we still believe we are the holders of the world). Ibrahim's look is unhelped for, his smile inviting, his gestures brotherly. He is the man that symbolises this meeting of artists and the object of his painting.

Ibrahim Hussein's painting is another landscape in my memory. As far as I know, the painting will stay close to the sacred tree.

The club is a place of words. If one wants it to be. A place of exchanges. Happiness is what one does with it; happiness is also what one can say about it. Solitude is everywhere. Isolation is fruitful. Ibrahim Hussein tears off the pages of the sky just as I tore off those of my copy book to smile and say to him "thank you".

YVES NAVARRE

April 9, 1987

(translated by Solange Eggermont)

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