

Dit Dot Ditty, Dit Dot a Ditty Ditty

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“This picture is a translation of the symbols of our family tradition that grows from the culture of agriculture. It is a reminder of the passion implanted in us for the perseverance of caring for life. Flowers are icons that I borrow from memories of childhood.”

Wayan Novi, *Blossoming Memories*, 2017



Wayan Novi, *Blossoming Memories (Kenangan Yang Tumbuh)* , 2017

Wayan Novi was born Iwayan Agus Novianto in the year 1989. Born in Bali, he now works and lives in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Novi is known for his canvases of intricate markings which resemble aboriginal art but are infused with a mix of pointillism and folk art. Pointillism is the name given to a modern art movement in Europe where artists fill their canvasses with dots of paint, leading to the formation of images. The two most famous pointillist painters are Georges Seurat and Paul Signac. However, Novi's artwork is different

from pointillism because, instead of dots of paint, he fills his canvasses with short dashes, made with a ball-point pen. One must look closely at his work to find the hidden layers beneath a sea of these dashes that form swirls, like ocean waves, on his large canvasses.

Wayan, as he is affectionately referred to, was born in the mountainous village of Angsri, Bali. He recalls the chilly temperatures of Angsri and the warmth of the kitchen where his family and friends would gather for convivial meals and chatter. There is a heartfelt longing to go home in Wayan's work. Interspersed amongst the sea of intricate details, where the eye must strain to find shapes and motifs, are child-like sketches of teapots, cups, flora and fauna, animals and the peaks of mountains.



Wayan Novi, *Sun-bathing My Sunshine (Memandikan Sinar Matahari Pagi)*, 2017

In one piece, Wayan has included his pet, a cockerel, so reminiscent of Balinese mornings and his childhood. He played with seven roosters as a child, he recounts. As a child, he was privy to many conversations taking place in the warmth radiating from the kitchen fire and the markings etched by ballpoint pens represent these conversations: "... [t]hey represent the life stories of an agrarian society where most work as farmers and important

issues for them are, the meaning of mountains, sun, land, animals and awareness of the balance of this ecosystem”, explains the curator, Ignatia Nilu (whose real name is Nilam Agusta Nugraeni), an independent curator and a member of the ArtJog curatorial team since 2015.

In these canvases, one senses that the child in Wayan is emerging in this re-enactment of home and that child wants to go home. His paintings resonate with me because I too have a longing to come home. The Singapore of today no longer resembles the one I grew up in and that I remember. I have returned home after more than 20 years away, yet home is not what I remember it to be. Novi’s work portrays that longing in a visual language. He leaves viewers with a rudimentary sketch of a house, a teapot, or mountain peaks. This is what he remembers of home, his home in Angsri. The nostalgia is infectious.



Wayan Novi, *Landscape*, 2017

Initially, the viewer is left with a sense of confusion due to the patterns made by the repetitive minuscule dashes filling the canvas. My first response was of giddiness from staring at one piece, *Blossoming Memories*, for a few minutes. It almost feels like I was on a boat in choppy waters. I felt really unanchored. However, upon looking longer, I began to sense a blanket of tranquillity descending. The peace that came later was a result of the familiar objects that my eyes found—a teapot, for example, or a child-like sketch of a house, another; mesmerised, the dashes and swirls finally carried me back to my own unconscious sense of hearth and home. I once drew pictures with houses made of a

triangle for a roof and an oblong for the body of the house. I started to feel anchored again.

I believe that art finds the collector or buyer and this is what Wayan has achieved unconsciously by painting from the depths of his soul; his art speaks to the wandering soul in us, the soul that is longing to find a place called home. The energy his art exudes is magnetic.



Installation view of Wayan Novi's exhibition at Art Porters

Wayan Novi is represented by Art Porters, a contemporary art gallery based in Singapore. Art Porters is housed in a heritage site once a popular area where native-born Singaporeans, the Peranakans, used to live and work. The gallery is situated in a glass-fronted Chinese shophouse that allows for the showcasing of contemporary art against a traditional and historical landscape. Hence, the contemporary works of Wayan Novi are able to blend into this landscape, yet shine on their own terms.

Art Porter's tagline – sharing happiness with art – is the mission that founders, Guillaume Levy-Lambert and Sean Soh, live up to. The founders believe sincerely that art can transform lives. With this purpose at heart, they have built intimate and lifelong relationships with the artists they represent and Wayan is one of them whom the gallery refers to as their "artist-in-the-gallery". A current exhibition, Landscape of Memories, testifies to this special friendship between the artist and the founders. This exhibition must not be missed because it is also a narrative of Wayan's memories – a visual description – of a particular sense of home and hearth, found only in Angsri, Indonesia. Landscape is on until 15 April 2018.