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Procession: The Celebration of Birth and Continuity

by

I Made Jodog

A non-thesis project submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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The exhibition is dedicated to Santra Putra family, mom for giving birth! Eel, snail and dog!

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Preface

The culture of Bali with characteristics of playfulness, sincerity of the spirit of the festivities, encouraged me to enjoy the process of the celebrations, and carry it into personal interest and experience. Celebrations such as “*mekiyis*,” a Balinese procession, for purification corrupts my mind in good way. For me it carried the idea of the process of continuity and elevation.

Lately when I am living at a distance from my family and their cultural environment, I feel separated visually and am thinking of them, but also I am becoming related to them stronger emotionally. I did contemplation and thinking in relation to family, friends, home and my temporary living now. I feel very close to them emotionally in appreciating of being alive right now. Birth is a fundamental issue of the tie of the relation to family. However I also enjoy the exploration, being in the new and temporary community of life with modern urban society. I appreciate the diverse way of living, “roommate”, and friends, the new way of sharing of living, the celebrating of life in different ways. Mass commercial culture is part of life here.

The birth and continuity process of living are the main inspirations of my art works. The sense of traditional Balinese celebratory culture and mass commercial culture both influenced me. My MFA exhibition is like a procession celebrating birth and the process of life.

Watching Birth

When I was five, I saw the birth of my sister at my family compound. Nobody was allowed see the event except a healer and my father who assisted in the process of birth. I was very curious about seeing the process, and so secretly watched it with my brother from the veranda through the window. It wasn't a secret after my father opened the window for air circulation in the room! The stretching, struggle, anxiety of the process made me more curious, excited, and also made me emotional. Remembering the events, I feel I was a little bold, but at the same time I also feel it was a very important event in my life. It is one of the deep ties of my emotions and spirit to my family. Particularly when I am at a long distance from them, it rises up frequently in my mind. I compare the process of birth with continued possibilities of growth, and process of being. This has influenced my work.

In the spiritual aspect of Balinese tradition (Hindu), every person born also has four spiritual siblings or "brothers" (*catur sanak*) named *Anggapati*, *Rajapati*, *Banaspati* and *Banaspati Raja*. They are symbolized by the fetal membrane, blood, umbilical cord and placenta. These spiritual siblings are believed to assist in the birth of the baby and always accompany him/her as long as he/she lives (Balinese birth day celebration is dedicated to these four siblings, ancestors and to Almighty God). Nevertheless, I also see in a metaphorical way that the fluid (fetal membrane, blood, umbilical cord and placenta) is an idea to hold the spirit of protection, courage, intelligence, balance, grounded heart, holding the tie of the good relationship to the source of living and social environment.

Aspects of fluidity apply almost in every part of my works. It is also my desire that the greatness of all above spirit accompany my life.

Procession

Life is a process of continuity from one event to another, one thing to another, and present time to following time. Seeking the idea of continuity, I create art works as processions. The procession is the group action of a collection of people, animals, or vehicles moving ahead in more or less regular formation. These processions carry the idea of grouping and moving ahead or forward. In my processions, I put emphasis on experiences, events and the process of life. I create objects as events following each other. It is a metaphor for the continuity of process in birth, giving birth from one to the others.

My procession is going out of the room. It creates the relationship between the inside of the room and the outside of the room (limited space and open space). It is like birth in a metaphorical way, like growing from the womb into bigger space. It also reminds me of a Balinese procession ceremony (*mekiyis/melasti*), which usually goes from temple or house to the river or beach. The works go out of the door to create the sense of cordially inviting people to attend the event, warmly greeting, friendly welcoming them. I also want the work to say the procession has just started. Or it also might make people a little vulnerable: they get in the room that the art works want to get out of.

Growing and Flowing

Letting the idea develop from one work to the other as growing process, is a complement of a procession process. It is a metaphor for birth and the continuity of life. This is also a sense of flowing energy. I also let the idea grow in the creative process, let it open possibilities including some level of change in the installation, using the material with flexibility, stretching it like growing process getting bigger and more concrete.

Layer of Structure

The interaction of the works reflects social interaction in individual and social space. It is expressed in the social structure of the art works. Each object seems to exist within itself, but also creates dialog and sharing between the objects, and is interactive to the audience as well. It is the idea of multiple levels of sharing. It is like sharing joyous time, a lot of excitement and other experiences. The interaction process is also an expression of the process of giving birth from one to the other.

Ambiguous

The forms are created both in abstract and non-abstract ways, which at some level seem to be recognizable as things, but they also look like they have their own world, own life. It is like seeing the physical world and seeing something else that you've never seen. The

form is part of fantasy, recognizing some part of the object and having the curiosity to know more about it, like curiosity to know about the new baby. It is also like the undiscoverable nature of everything in life and also like life already discovered because we are already in the process.

The recognizable parts of the works usually are inspired by the objects around me as such as snails, dogs, bells, eels, people, sinks, pools. They are related to my experience, which I present as metaphor, paradox of fiction, which keeps open many possibilities.

Snail or Dog or Others

Snail is a creature which walks very slow; it could be a dog tied with a string. They are very limited in terms of walking: snail is free but his walking is very slow. The dog has the ability to walk fast, but he is tied on the column at home. Because of the kindness and niceness of their boss to help carry them to the celebration, dog and snail are able to attend. They are very happy and feel great (yellow color). On their neck is a hole, like a place for them to look inside, appreciating and saving happiness at their heart; or it also looks like a wound of themselves, because snail still wishes to be a dog with its ability to walk fast, and dog wishes to have the freedom of the snail. In the guest book they do not know how to write their name, snail or dog, because also they could not read and write any alphabet. Probably also they are not a snail and not a dog, or they are like a creature from a different world without any ID card.

Eel with Two Tails (and Others)

Eel is very sly because of his skin. He is very happy to have two tails, more than the regular eel. But also, not all of his tail gets slippery. The extra tail makes him awkward too because one tail has been hung on the traditional ceiling and the other tail is still around his body. He did not have courage to come down on the new solid ground, to try to live there yet. He also is worried that a chicken will dismantle his tail. The eel is just so happy and jumps when he sees a new mud for living, but he also goes to the celebration to get second extra happiness, luck there. He eats so many hot dogs and drinks soda. It makes his stomach get fat, big and makes him look like not an eel any more. Probably he is not eel or he is also another thing.

Dynamic and Fluid

The intensity of the birth process and activity of daily living inspired me to carry the sense of the dynamic, active color into the works such as red and yellow. The soft tones refer to baby, young or just starting process; color in more solid and stronger intensity refers to growth process. The variety of the different color creates richness, but at the same time remains almost monochromatic. Every being begins simple with birth, then becomes complex.

The color also expresses the sense of fluidity, which also reminds me of the fluid element in the birth process. It is created with epoxy, which gives sense of fluid transformed into solid material. However, epoxy also gives a sense of artificial in the works.

Stretching and Playful

Birth and growing are also expressed in the elasticity of materials such as nightgown, underwear and stocking. They are seducing me to stretch the material and make it almost like really growing, getting bigger in a very playful way. I feel they almost say, "Jodog stretch me, please....", but sometimes they also reach to the level, that they say "Jodog that's enough... it is pain!". Both are expressed in the process of birth. The sense of playfulness is also expressed by using balloons in the works and at the same time giving a sense of celebration of joyous time.

Sincerity

The process of making my art works is sincere by developing it freely and letting it grow, letting the works get bigger. It reminds me of the sincerity of making offering for the celebration of Hindu ceremony. It is still sincere if suddenly the air of the balloon gets out or the balloon gets popped. It could be happening and also accepted as part of the process.

Some of my material is considerate taboo and “dirty” in Balinese culture, like nightgowns and underwear related to religious temple ceremony. I am interested in including these items of material rather than punishing them as dirty objects. They have become part of procession, which elevates the object, like in life process.

Annotated Bibliography

Cooke, Lynne, Schwabsky, Barry, Tillman, Lynne,

Jessica Stockholder, Phaidon Press Limited, 1995

Cooper, Helen A,

Eva Hesse: a retrospective, Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Yale University Press New haven and London, 1964. I like “Untitled” works, using of latex over rope, string and wire, it is about playing but also holding together.

Graze, Sue and Halbreich, Kathy (organizer),

Elizabeth Murray: Paintings and Drawings, Harry N. Abrams, Inc., New York, In association with the Dallas Museum of Art and the MIT Committee on the Visual Arts, 1987.

Lyotard, Jean Francois,

Sam Francis Lesson of Darkness, The Lapis Press, Venice, California, 1993. I like particularly his works on Sam Francis Lesson of Darkness, his writing of different perspectives, paradox and keep open of possibilities of thought.

Balinese birth celebration http://www.baliechomagezine.com/features/birthday_bali.html

Works by Momoyo Torimitsu particularly the work with the title “ Somehow I don’t feel comfortable” exhibited at Tampa Museum April 21- June 23 2002. I am interested in the sense of artificiality, rounding form, sense of play but also at the same time it looks in very uncomfortable situation. The glossiness of commercial color also inspired me. Web reference <http://n.s.art.free.fr/artist/torimitsu.htm>

I am interested in Balinese *Ogoh-ogoh* (symbol of invisible disturber), which is for procession for *Ngrupuk*, end of the day before New Year. The process is full of sincerity, fun, and sense of play but also serious for spiritual religious ceremony. In some level, the

process of my work is reminds me of the process in this celebration. Web reference http://www.balifriend.net/nyepi_day/nyepi_day_001.html

During the summer break 2003 I also did collaborative works with Chad Abel. It happened because we like each other's works and coincidently we were using similar material. I enjoyed the collaboration, and it also played between compromise, cooperation and resistance.