



Mid Life

a solo exhibition of Indyra

Jakarta, October 1st, 2013

Dia.lo.gue artspace proudly presents Indyra's solo exhibition titled 'Mid Life', curated by Jim Supangkat.

After more than 20 years of using the Body as a medium of expression, Indyra has appropriated the female body as a source of information. This is Indyra's contemplation, using her own body and her own life as reference. She stated that some of her contemplations have collided with existing stereotypes regarding the female body and women themselves. This view has urged her to seek unusual ideas and new idioms in order to raise the issue of the female body in her paintings. The body, in her paintings, serve as a 'daily journal' (a diary) where she can trace her life's journey and where she can discover her life's framework.

Two years ago, through her interaction with this 'diary', she finally realized a mid-life shift in her life. "This is a spiritual experience, whose effects can be felt on my body and my organs," she said. "There is something that moves upwards, from my tailbone, along my spine, to the mid-brain". A desire to express this unique experience has led her to a spontaneous and surprising idea.

This idea was born from a photograph. It happened during an attempt to combine painting with photography. During a photo session, she arranged a dancer in full head-gear, but otherwise naked elsewhere. She requested the dancer to pose as a model. This photo session yielded a series of works that appeared as a combination of photographs and realistic painting techniques. They are dazzling. They have a sense of provocation that is not easy to describe.

Through these works, Indyra seems to have found a framework to express various mid-life realities in women's lives. She stated how, to her, the full-headgear represents "a crown" that symbolizes the head as a region of contemplation, a region that processes bodily experience as consciousness. Meanwhile, the body is regarded as an entity that stores an instinct about sensuality, fertility, and nutritional awareness. This is the issue being raised here, at *Dia.lo.gue Artspace* this October 2013. This is not a standalone exhibition. Female figures appearing in this exhibition are new pages on a 'diary' that cannot be separated from previous pages.

In her 2007 solo exhibition, *The Eye and I*, Indyra presented a series of paintings of the body of a female who has liberated her Self/body from an illusion too dependent upon the harmonious relationship between men and women. The resulting consciousness has allowed the woman to liberate her body language from the instinctive act of covering one's genitalia. This series of paintings has meticulously presented the sensuality of her body—through gestures, body movements, gazes, and mimics. It presents Indyra's reflections when contemplating the existence of women. Like other female painters—everywhere—Indyra has presented “the female body as a region of conflict”.

In the current exhibition, this issue remains central to the cause, despite presenting various new commentaries/notes. In Indyra's paintings here, the woman mostly poses in such a way as to present her back to the audience, as though trying to hide the front of her body. Unlike a body language that has been liberated from that instinctual act of covering oneself, this back-revealing pose shows a tendency to cover up that is no longer fueled by instinct. The body language in this pose seems to be shadowed by thoughts driven by stereotypes.

In her *mid-life*, a hormonal condition ends a female's fertility. Indyra views this condition as a positive natural indication. She said, “It's not negative at all.” She regretted the stereotypes that have driven females to think that their life's worth ends at mid-life. Indyra views this as a drama inside a dominated life. In their youth, the female body is considered as a sex object, a source of reproduction and nutrition—gender-driven signs that set women apart from men. When these signs disappear as mid-life approaches, it seems as though a woman's life worth disappears with them. “So, when exactly can a woman live and decide for herself what the meaning of her body should be?” Indyra asked.

If in *The Eye and I* Indyra presented a female in the act of liberating her body and youthful existence, then at this exhibition, she is reimagining the same act being executed in mid-life. Once again communicating her critical attitude against stereotypes, the female backs in her paintings never lose their sensuality. In this region, Change—that travels up from her tailbone to the mid-brain—shows the kind of instinct that resides inside a body that continues to work through processes, in order to reach a consciousness or an awareness of the true meaning about body sensations. It seems as though she is trying to demonstrate the truth behind the expression: *'life begins at mid life'*.

The “crown” symbol in her paintings is directly connected to this conviction. In her paintings, Indyra has sharply delineated the images of crowns and the images of the body. Crowns are presented realistically; they are colorful and boisterous. Meanwhile, the body is presented in chromatic colors, in fleeting brushstrokes and shrouded in misty atmosphere. Tension between both expressions describe a condition where the consciousness (in the head) observes the body. “This only happens in mid-life and not before,” Indyra explained. In *mid-life*, a person cultivates self-respect for her own body, because it is in mid-life when the body is finally free from various stereotypes and demands. Indyra believes that this kind of self-respect is what gives charm to the female figure.

Beneath these seemingly-rebellious expressions is a contemplation that reflects Indyra's basic/fundamental view on mid-life. It appears in a series of paintings arranged in a particular formation, titled “Time Heals”. The series can be seen as the keynote to all the works presented at this exhibition—highlighting the theme of a “winged woman”. Despite its symbolic theme, this turn of phrase is expressively done in her works. It does not rely on symbols.

In her attempt to seek out new idioms and ideas to display the body, there are discoveries that have become Indyra's unique characteristic: "the language of brushstrokes" demonstrating eloquence. We need to further elaborate upon the term "eloquence", so its understanding does not stop at "self-expression".

From its synonyms, we can interpret that "self-expression" demonstrates expressiveness. In daily life, we witness this through expressive speech—involving various intonations, mimics and gestures, especially hand gestures. From other synonyms to "eloquence", we can capture the meaning that this sort of speech is not limited to "emotion"—it is not merely emotional. The *intentions* that emerge in expressive speech contain articulation, persuasiveness, and even fluency in the delivery of a message. Intentions show a person's capacity to capture, record, store, and utilize the semiotics of meaning and perception regarding the signs used to convey messages.

"Time Heals" amply demonstrates this symptom. The *expressiveness* exuding from this work has made the images appear less clearly. A number of paintings in this series even come across as rather abstract. The most important aspect of this series is the tension of idioms/language of expression—for instance the different brushstrokes employed. Presented as a series, the tension between idiom and blurred body image seems to present a red thread that connects a linear progression.

Indyra agrees with this assessment. In this series, she is certainly raising an issue of her life's journey. Changes to her mid-life body have helped her to look back and discover the history of herself. In turn, they help carry her to a more peaceful understanding about her body and her life. This awareness/consciousness has liberated her body from the constraints imposed by hurt, anger, regret, fear, and vengeance. It leads to new horizons that inspire a consciousness, an understanding that the bodies in her paintings are 'journals' that will never cease to be written; a consciousness that mid-life is just another stopover. "My life's journey is a never-ending story," she said.

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