

## DISINI Discovers – Albert Yonathan Setyawan July 25, 2018



### **1/ When did you decide that you wanted to become an artist?**

I've always liked visual arts since I was a child, and I've always been sure about the subject that I wanted to study. But there was never a definite moment where I consciously decided to be an artist. It was more of a process, which only begun before I graduated from university in 2007.

### **3/ Do you listen to music when you work? How does this help your process?**

I listen to music most of the time, whenever possible, especially when I'm working. Music helps me concentrate.

### **2/ Why did you choose to work with clay and ceramics in your practice?**

I find clay to be a very interesting material. Ceramics is a primitive and archaic medium, especially in the study of material culture. It is, however, still very relevant to the way we live our life today.

### **4/ How long does it usually take you to complete an artwork?**

It varies. Sometimes it could take just one or two months. Other works, including the ongoing works that I'm working on, could take six months to a year.



**8/ This series of works draws from a previous series (displayed indoors) where you also added planting mediums to clay. What made you bring the work outdoors?**

I wanted to try different set-ups. I tested various settings to see how the clay evolves, while also observing the growth of the seeds. It is a very experimental work that requires trial and error, but I hope that after several tries, I will be able to find a perfect balance.

**10/ Are you a perfectionist when it comes to art?**

I guess I am quite a bit of a perfectionist. If I already have an idea in mind of what kind of result I would like to achieve, I would focus on trying to achieve that pre-imagined result. But outside art-related issues and other daily matters, I can get quite messy.

**12/ What is your Ph.D. topic about?**

My Ph.D. topic is about the practice of Hendrawan Riyanto. He's one of the prominent ceramic artists from Indonesia, who was active in the late 1980's until the beginning of the 2000's. My focus is to trace

**5/ Is there a reason you used raw and unfired clay?**

Clay is a metaphor for the human body. It refers to the earth, to the ground that binds us, connecting every living being on the planet. When raw clay does not undergo the firing process, it will dissolve back to its initial mound, where it can be re-used to construct other forms again. That is why I choose to use unfired clay - for its fleeting and temporary state.

**6/ Why did you use Peranakan designs as the inspiration for your recent DISINI works?**

I like the Peranakan pottery designs and how the ornaments represent a hybrid mixture of several different cultures. When assembled and casted, the ornamental details don't blend into one single identity. Instead, they are nicely composed, while still keeping their distinctive characteristics intact. This time, though, I chose to only work with the outlines and forms; stripping them of all details, bringing Peranakan pottery back to its most fundamental shapes.

**7/You explore impermanence in these works as the clay breaks down over time. Are you more focused on the process than the result?**

Yes, I am, particularly in this project. I feel that most ceramic practices would focus more on the final results. We would craft to achieve a pre-planned design, to freeze and eternalize visual beauty. This time, I want to capture the moments of ceramic practices, by exposing the flaws and natural characteristics of the process. I'd like to explore the physical states of clay and incorporate nature within, where seeds can grow in damp weather and how the sculptures would harden and crack in extreme outdoor heat.

**9/ Your older works used repetition, with controlled details and patterns. What was your intention with that method?**

his thought process in the development of his major installations and performance pieces. I'm analyzing how the Javanese folk religion, spiritual traditions and ritual practices have syncretised and influenced his practice as a ceramist.



**14/ What was the most ambitious project you have created so far?**

It would be the work I've done for SUNSHOWER exhibition, at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (2017). I forced myself to make more than 2,000 pieces all on my own; from moulding, casting, carving, firing and glazing. I did it without any help of an assistant in less than six months - a very short period of time. It was the biggest work I've done in terms of scale and it was very rewarding to see it installed on the museum wall.

**15/ What do you do for fun?**

Making work is fun. Well, outside of my studio work, 'fun' for me would be going to metal and underground gigs. Going to record stores, browsing through their shelves and boxes... that is pretty fun, too.

I've always been fascinated by geometric patterns. They represent the human mind and the psyche; of how we try to find balance between the controllable and the uncontrollable, between the organic and the fabricated. Our lives, too, consist of an infinite variety of patterns - visually, tangibly and in an intangible and abstract way.

**11/ How has the experience of living and studying in Japan influenced your work?**

After so many years, I still don't know how to describe it. Japan might have affected me in terms of organizing how I work, but the routine is different from what I had before (in Bandung). I work alone most of the time, without any assistant. It's not ideal and it becomes a limitation on the amount of works I can do. But, I feel more focused than before - more cohesive in my output, even when I am working on several different works at the same time.

**13/ What was it like to be a part of the group that represented Indonesia at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013?**

It was a wonderful opportunity to be able to see my work there, as part of the Biennale's installment.

