

Wizard Wianta

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Ayundari Gunansyach talks to Made Wianta about art, family, freedom and the benefits of garlic. Photo: Stephane Sensey.

MEETING Made Wianta – one of Indonesia’s most respected artists – at his Seputih Gallery, which is a studio, gallery, and his house, I didn’t know that the conversation would go on for hours.

Dressed casually and serving me tea and cake Made talks of his life as freedom: “You shouldn’t make a big deal of life, it’s very laid back. I have no reason behind my works, I don’t know how to explain that when I’m being asked, my only answer to that is no other than because I love doing it.”

His works make people wonder. He works with unusual media – blood, razors, nails, to name but a few of the unusual materials he has used in his work. Made doesn’t like to categorise himself in an artistic sense.

“Art is a freedom, so why limit yourself?” he asks.



To wit, Made's expression includes painting, installation, dance and choreography performances, photography and sculpture.

Born in Apuan village, Tabanan, Bali, the youngest of a family with 10 children, his father was a priest. In 1974, he graduated from Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia in Yogyakarta, where he met his wife, Intan – granddaughter of Ki Hajar Dewantara, Indonesia's education hero.

One of his projects that piqued my interest was his solo exhibition titled Dream Land that went on show in 2003 after the Bali bombings in 2002. The terrorist attack – in which much blood was spilled, Bali declared unclean by the Balinese Hindu hierarchy and far too many innocent people died – inspired the contemplation that was a combination of art installation and a performance piece played by Made Wianta himself.



He took an array of pictures from the bombing site and printed them on canvas splattered with freshly slaughtered cow's blood. Horrible, horrifying, and controversial, Dream Land laid bare the nature of senseless violence for all to see.

When talking about Dream Land, one can see the pain of those times return to Made's face.

Our conversation kept going until after sunset and Made kept spoiling me with food, serving chicken satay for dinner – garnished with raw garlic. He says this habit has been keeping the flu at bay throughout his life.

“This luckily works for me and my wife, there is no guarantee that the same treatment will work for you or other people,” he says.



“I don't want to restrict my kids, I let them fly free like a bird to (achieve) their dreams, because the most important thing for me is their happiness,” he smiles.

He is expecting his first grandchild soon – his youngest daughter, Sanjiwani, is a mother-to-be, and Made can't hide his excitement.

Talking about freedom is his second-favorite topic. It fits well with his newest exhibition titled Freedom, held in Gaya Gallery, Ubud since December 2014. He didn't stop with creating the art himself – as he often does, he brought in other artists to collaborate and interact in an art space. In Freedom a bird is the emblematic centrality. And plays the main role in the painting, installation, and art performances.



Talking with Made Wianta makes me see him as more than an exquisitely talented artist with crazy ideas designed to make people think. He is also is a husband who adores his wife, a father who gives his daughters the freedom to achieve happiness, and a man who contemplates no boundaries.