

LIFE • ART & CULTURE

# Art activist's discussion in Bali launches landmark entrepreneurial program for disabled

*"I am here as a survivor because of my art," said visual artist and mental health activist Hana Madness, who actively campaigns about art and mental health issues in Indonesia.*

Richard Horstman (The Jakarta Post)  
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Ella Ritchie (right), director and co-founder of Intoart UK, is accompanied by Samantha Tio, director and co-founder of the Ketemu Project, while judging at Pasar Ketemu. (Ketemu Project/File)

"Art Has Saved My Life" was a discussion led by two art activists on June 29 at the Rumah Sanur Creative Hub in Bali.

The discussion was one of the insightful forums of Ayo Ketemu! (Let's Meet!), a landmark entrepreneurial creative program for Indonesians with mental and physical disabilities.

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"I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. More recently, however, I began experimenting in 2012 with art to help alleviate the stress and isolation caused by the mistreatment and deteriorating family and school relationships. I had no other choice, so I poured my energy into my journal, sketching, painting and writing my thoughts," said the Jakarta-born activist who was named one of the "Top 10 Most Shining Young Indonesian Artists" in 2017.

"When I was first diagnosed, the issue of mental health in Indonesia was still taboo. There is now, however, a huge global momentum exposing the problems of mental health in modern society. My paintings have become my weapon to fight against my mental health issues," she states.

Budi "Kabul" Agung Kuswara is an artist and the co-founder of the Ketemu Project, an art organization and community art space with a strong social philosophy and international program, located in Bali. In 2017 he initiated the "Schizofriends Art Movement", a community-based psychosocial rehabilitation program with art as the delivery system, devoted to supporting people living with schizophrenia to become active and functional individuals within a society.

"Ayo Ketemu! is a nurturing platform for people with disabilities who have already started to create their own art and creative products," said Kabul. "It is designed so that people with mental and physical disabilities can meet with artists to exchange ideas and viewpoints to help realize possibilities and with exciting potential for collaboration. The output of this first-time project in Indonesia targeting the disabled is highly marketable and export quality products and services."

Furthermore, Gerakan Kreabilitas is an initiative working in conjunction with the Ketemu Project and the Arts Development Company, funded by the British Council of Indonesia through the program of Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies (DICE).

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“Gerakan Kreabilitas is [...] sparked by the premise that every individual is creative regardless of their abilities,” said Gerakan Kreabilitas program coordinator Rahma Yudi Amartina.

“Kreabilitas is a fusion of the terms “kreatif” [creative] and “abilitas” [ability] that reflects our vision of combining creative innovations and cultural development with business strategies. For this program, we have selected 30 participants from around Indonesia through our open call for participants in the visual arts, visual communication design, product design, craft and fashion categories.”

On June 30, Pasar Ketemu, the second open-to-public event held at Rumah Sanur, was a bazaar space for participants to present their products, ideas or prototypes to a judging panel comprising Mayun Dewi (social enterprise manager, Ketemu Project), Camelia Harahap (head of arts and creative industries, British Council Indonesia), Yap Mun Ching (executive director, AirAsia Foundation), Slamet Thohari (lecturer, researcher and co-founder CDSS, Universitas Brawijaya), Ella Ritchie (director and co-founder, Intoart UK) and Baskoro Junianto (expert and curator, Badan Ekonomi Kreatif).

Visitors to the event were also invited to contribute by voting for the creative enterprises that they believed were the most interesting and inclusive.

The five creative enterprises with the most inclusive ideas are to receive seed funding of Rp 24 million, as well as six months of incubation and mentoring support from July to December 2019, for the development of their products and services, along with marketing and promotion both in Indonesia and globally. The final event of the program and the third event open to the public on July 1 was the panel discussion on Painting the Future of Creative Economy, which explored the topic of a more inclusive arts and creative economy industry for Indonesians with disabilities.

Panelists for the discussion were Paul Smith (director, British Council Indonesia) and Yap Mun Ching (executive director, AirAsia Foundation), as well as (as previously mentioned) Baskoro Junianto and Slamet Thohari, while the moderator was Samantha Tio (director and co-founder, Ketemu Project).

“We are happy and grateful to be one of the selected creative enterprises. We hope that we’ll get a lot of insights and new experiences to contribute to the Indonesian economy by creating social impact,” said the makers of the Surprise Wellness Kit, Patricia Thebez from Jakarta and Devi Soewono from Bali, whose purpose was to create collections of products to support mental health sufferers based on different moods. Each product has a distinct response to each emotion..

“We are so delighted and this is unexpected for us,” said Vindy Ariella from Jakarta and Khomsin from Surakarta, whose project, the Mental Health Kit, was judged as one of the five most creative enterprises. “We hope that our product can grow in the global market and be useful for many people. Thank you, Gerakan Kreabilitas and the Ketemu Project!”

Their Mental Health Kit comes in a bag and contains a book about mental health, a mindfulness journal, a sweater and aromatherapy candles.

“The event was a great success with a lot of participants collaborating regardless if they were the selected among the five creative enterprises or not,” stated Amartina. “I am amazed and inspired by all of the participants and their natural creative abilities, along with their powerful sense of self-belief.” (mut)