

DETU WISESA

FRAGMENTED REALITIES

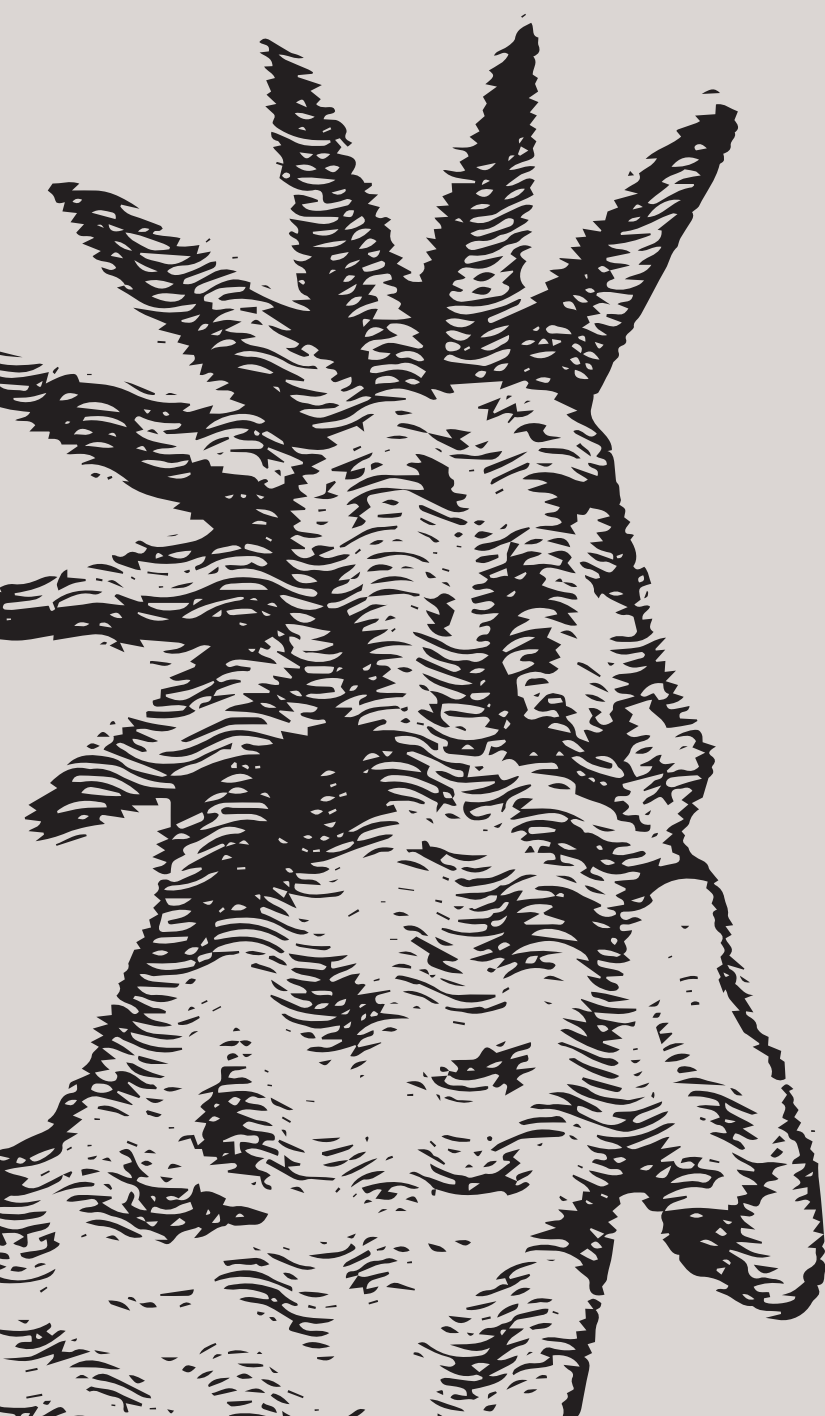
CURATED BY PANDE SRI W.

UMA SEMINYAK

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FRAGMENTED REALITIES presents Detu Wisesa's journey to carve his artistry. These works were created between 2021 and 2022 while living on his mother island of Bali. Braving the vast landscape he has set himself, Detu walks the lines between his many realities; of identity, techniques, materials, and perspective. The realities he himself possesses are not only his personal stories, but the different realms and disciplines he crosses, or expands, with each of his artworks.

One of the very first times I met Detu was a few weeks into his self-appointed 'residency' in Sayan, just a little West of Ubud. On the floor of his semi-outdoor balcony sprawled Detu and his roommate with what I realised is his very own silk screen printing table. After casually taking several print making courses, he has assembled his own silkscreen printing kit with craftsmen in Ubud. That night him and his roommate were passing the squeegee to one another, the tool printmakers use to force ink through the printing screen and onto the media. It was in the middle of Indonesia's large-scale social restriction during COVID 19 lockdown. Ubud vanished into a ghost town and there was nothing to do after sunset.

It's no wonder that that Detu caught the Ubud's enchanting charm which ignited a fire in him. Throughout history Ubud have fostered

revolutionary periods of creativity through the patronage of expatriate artists and the Ubud Royal Family. The 1930's marked a cultural renaissance in Ubud that was supported by Walter Spies and Rudolf Bonnet. Spies found the Ubudians in particular to be a culture 'completely devoted to art,' which aged appropriately to the town's position within contemporary art in Indonesia [i].

Detu was no stranger to the Balinese attitude towards art. He grew up to Balinese parents and moved around the country through Indonesia's transmigration program. A self-proclaimed nomad but he has always identified himself as Balinese. This strong sense of self paired combined with his willingness to understand different viewpoints gave Detu an outsider's perspective. This provided his mission to represent as many contrasting points of view as possible, even if they conflicted.

The first realities he challenged was between his academic background, as a graphic designer, and his need to create, as an artist. We are not here to question the timeless discourse on the difference between graphic communication design and fine art. However, the most obvious consideration between the two disciplines is intention— what and who are these artworks meant to be for?

In the book *Art and Graphics*, edited by Willy Rotzler, he distincts the difference between “free art” and “applied art”. The former is “free of any external responsibilities and is produced for its own sake; the latter is in service of a third party for purposes other than art, such as commerce [ii]. But throughout history

these divisions have been blurred through the relationship between patrons, and the precarious relationship between the art market, institutions, and everything in between. Technological breakthroughs hastened the ever-changing ways of communication and the modes of visual creation.

Many artists straddled the divergence of these two disciplines. Andy Warhol in particular struck a chord; he started off as a commercial art student in Pittsburgh, USA, in the 1940s. His obsession with pop culture is evoked by his prints of ubiquitous American brands, such as the famous Campbell soup or Del Monte tinned peach crates. Warhol's use of emblems within everyday life to reflect on our modern consumption culture.

Detu's sensitivity to symbols and visual representation also stems from a keen eye for visual qualities and the messaging it holds. *Sacred Heart* (2021) arose from his time in middle school where he was exposed to the diversity of religious and occult symbolism. Being in a Catholic school, he found the use of hearts, daggers and flame has existed for centuries before him yet retained the same profound meaning over time. He translated the visual essence of Sacred Heart and unravelled its meaning through his own illustration style and cheeky colour choice. An addition of a face, deconstructed but ever present, sits precariously on it.

The provenance of the Sacred Heart- to visually represent 'God's boundless and passionate love for mankind'- was also a way for Detu to reflect on human behaviour [iii]. He brought a face to humanise such an extreme and almost impossible expectation

humans have towards their faith, and towards one another. A wandering eye appears to show how the more you see, the more you gain a broader understanding of reality and the more you are willing to accept and understand others.

Having his first solo exhibition dedicated to more conventional art methods and craft presents his interest in handmade techniques. Print making evolved through massively replicating and communicating visual information. In serigraphy, printers are championed by the accuracy of each individual edition of a series.

Many of Detu's artworks started as digital illustration which he adjusts and changes according to his chosen technique. Having always been interested in print making, especially through some of his mentors, Detu enrolled in a print making studio in Ubud. There he saw an intimate process screen printing is as a hand-made technique and how it can be an extension to his practice.

Print making evolved through massively replicating and communicating visual information. In serigraphy, printers are championed by the accuracy of each individual edition of a series. Warhol's however questions its practice. He 'put a mockery of [higher artistic norms]' by imitating the process of mass production and challenged its purpose through Fine Art [iv].

Detu also found printmaking as more than just a creative conduit for image production. He used print making to explore his creative process. Every edition found in the series *Soleil et Chair* (2021) and *Untitled* (2021) are all different from one another, intentionally.

Untitled (2021) is a synthesis of screens from different compositions that Detu has combined together. Done in his DIY silkscreen printing kit, he detached these disjointed screen to creating both depth and dynamism in simple human portrait. Meanwhile *Soleil et Chair 3* and *5* came from the same base drawing that he manipulated through the choice of colour, cutting or additional painting. Detu intends to create the question of whether these works are merely products of prints that become in itself a artwork.

Opus Esse Uno, Unum Cognoscendi (2021) is a print of 1 edition, which challenges the assumption that printmaking should serve to replicate. Meanwhile *Shapes* (2022) uses linocut but infused with Detu's personal touch. The wispy and distorted form of a man holding onto his cup are uniformly printed unto the media. *Shapes* was done in Linoprint, where the final image is cut in relief on a wood or linoleum surface. He accentuates the handmade qualities of a linocut to showcase its physical process. A hint of blank ink (has the coffee spilled, or did he just catch a bug?) captures the careless improvisation an artist makes on upon his own print. Maybe some might think Detu has disfigured his own print, but instead he has inserted himself within this mechanical printing process.

“What is a stone? To a farmer it is an obstacle to be dug and carted from the field... But to a sculptor it is the repository of playful inner forms yearning for release...” - Lois Fischer-Rathus [v]

During the pandemic I brought Detu to meet Pak Wayan, Balinese

carver I was working with. In his workshop stood tens of elaborate Balinese carved door. However fast and accurately he has carved a door, he is never without his *mal*, or mould, which are the photocopied hand drawing of traditional Balinese motifs. These mal are utilised as the basis of his carving. A washed out black and white drawing of a motif is nothing more than a line drawing of flora and fauna. But in the hands of Pak Wayan, the two-dimensional flower unfolds in the flesh on the thick teak wood plank.

A few months after he asked a local *paras* (river stone) carver to teach him how to carve. Before long he had to move for work to Bandung and then Jogja, where he continued to inject a life to his Sacred Heart emblem. Starting with terracotta, and then moving on to its final form of resin and stainless steel.

Detu chose to reproduce his own work in *Sacred Heart in Relief* (2022). The symbol became a sculpture, almost like a crest or insignia. The stainless effect of the facade provided a cold, hard truth to the messaging behind it. This marks his first venture with dimensional representation. Consisting of fibre, metal, and paint, an intentional choice to bring what was once a flat drawing into the flesh.

The artist is a receptacle for emotions that come from all over the place: from the sky, from the earth, from a scrap of paper, from a passing shape, from a spider's web. This is why we must not discriminate between things.
- Conversations with Pablo Picasso [vi]

Having lived as an 'outsider' all his life has encouraged Detu to present the fractured, distorted and multiple point of views. Detu set forth fragmented perspectives as both visual and social commentary. This reminds me of principles in Cubism, the 20th century avant-garde art movement pioneered by Pablo Picasso. As art historian Lois Fichner-Rathus imbued, "Cubist artists were trying to communicate all the visual information available about a particular form, they were handicapped [...] by the two-dimensional surface.[vii]"

'Soleil et chair' is one of the first printmaking series he produced in Bali. The title borrows from Arthur Rimbaud's poem, which translates to *'Sun and Flesh'*. At the crux of this composition is the man with a mohawk, a character from Detu's past life when he ran away from home to live underneath a bridge (kolong jembatan) alongside the 'street urchins' of Jakarta. He was a hidden background within this new community, ready to observe a new reality of street kids who are more than they appear to be. A commitment to disrupt the norm, Detu observed, was their truth to live by. These street kids had their unique philosophy, and their 'peace' is different to others.

From the divine chaos of the crumbling walls, *'Soleil et Chair'* extrapolates light and dark through screenprint. Detu interplays the choice of colour and manipulates the size of the screen's mesh material to create shading of different degrees. He presents both natural light (the sun) and artificial light (the flashlight) that uses different techniques so that the mesh of the screen is used but barely visible. This chiaroscuro (or the Italian word of play of light

and dark) reflected Detu's experimentation with tonal contrast to create three-dimensionality in his figures.

Meanwhile the more recent work Detu is *Atomic Bomb* (2022). The graphic quality of this painting is highlighted by the interpolation of background and foreground. The preciseness of each line and shape made it seem it is a computer-generated image. Yet Detu applied this composition through painting and onto a conventional medium, paint on canvas. The juxtaposition of craft and preciseness exemplifies Detu's resiliency in expanding each of the techniques he uses.

The inspiration behind *Atomic Bomb* was through a Koi Fish competition. The black forms, meticulously hand painted, are patterns found on the bodies of a Koi fish. These liquid forms are contrasted to the bold use of colour blocking. There is never ending sense of where the canvas starts or ends.

Detu found out that there were competitions where humans would compete the pattern of their koi fish. They are prized through the colouring and motifs of their skin. This memory instilled a question in him of how one could judge something randomly found in nature within their own narrative. How else have humanity put their own assumptions and values within abstract, arbitrary sources. Due to the yearning for familiarity and a human bias, we put meaning behind things that seems random and uncontrollable.

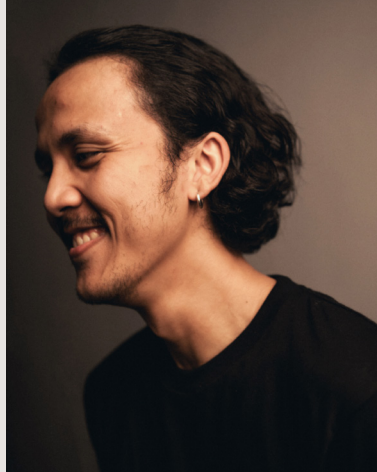
“Fragment after fragment, yet we still make sense of everything.”

Detu's artistry has walked in between different realities that feed onto one another. His overall goal was not to define his artistic sense, but to stretch the limits of his creativity and his chosen medium within the dichotomy of tradition. His relentless reimagining of techniques provided him with a basis to his artistry.

There is a quote by John Donne, a metaphysical poet, 'No Man is an Island' [viii]. Just as these separated memories contrast, they are part of his whole journey. Maybe Detu's realities will never intersect, but they always in flux. He confronts them one by one, with one foot in and one foot out the door.

**November 2022,
Pande Sri W.**

- [i] Jamie James, 'Ubud, the Heart of Bali' Jamie James (The Atlantic, 1999)
- [ii] See 'Art and Graphics', edited by Willy Rotzler (ABC, Zürich, 1983)
- [iii] Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, "OPENING OF THE YEAR FOR PRIESTS ON THE 150th ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF SAINT JOHN MARY VIANNEY." (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Vatican) 19 June 2009
- [iv] ICONEYE, "Andy Warhol Shaped How We Perceive the Visual World." September 3, 2020 <https://www.iconeye.com/opinion/andy-warhol-shaped-how-we-perceive-the-visual-world>
- [v] Lois Fichner-Rathus, "Understanding Art." (Cengage Learning; 11th edition. January 1, 2016), p. 130.
- [vi] Pablo Picasso, "Conversations with Picasso," in Art in Theory 1900-1990, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Wiley-Blackwell, New Jersey, 1993), p. 499.
- [vii] Fichner-Rathus,, p. 240.
- [viii] See John Donne's poem 'MEDITATION XVII, Devotions upon Emergent Occasions.' This meditative poem conveys the essence of the human place in the world which I hold close to my heart.



Detu Wisesa (b. Lhokseumawe 1997) explore symbols and compositions through both digital and analogue techniques. He grew up in Balinese communities around Aceh and Jakarta, and graduated with a degree in Visual Communication Design at Binus University. He has since moved to Bali to pursue his artistry.

Detu is constantly inspired by personal observations of contemporary society and human behavior. He responds to them with a new sense of awareness in his work, infused with his interest in graphic art. We all live in our own different reality, but Detu tries to bring upon a multiplicity of perspectives through abstract and symbolic forms.



Raya Sayan no.24 (2021)

Watercolor on paper
32 x 24 cm

Collection of the artist



Untitled (2021) ●

Limited edition of 1
Screen print with acrylic ink
on archival paper
56 x 76 cm

IDR 7,500,000 (SOLD)



Untitled (2021)

Limited edition of 1
Acrylic Paint and screen print
with acrylic ink on archival paper
56 x 76 cm

Collection of Ignatio Rivaldo



Soleil et Chair 3 (2021)

Artist's proof edition
Screen print with acrylic ink
on paper
35 x 35 cm

Collection of Novan Fikra



Soleil et Chair 5 (2022)

Limited edition of 8
Screen print with acrylic ink
on paper
50 x 50 cm

IDR 4,000,000

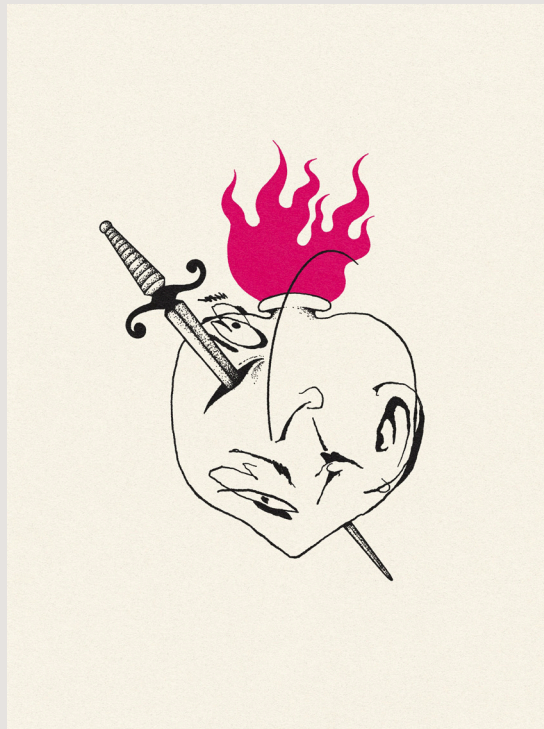
edition number 8 is sold



***Opus Esse Uno Unum Cognoscendi* (2021)**

Limited edition of 1
Screen print with acrylic ink
on archival paper
56 x 76 cm

IDR 8,000,000



Sacred Heart (2021)

Limited edition of 10
Screen print with acrylic ink
on archival paper
30 x 40 cm

IDR 3,333,000

edition number 1, 3, 7, 8, 10 are sold



Sacred Heart in Relief (2022)

Fiber, metal and paint
47 x 85 x 28,5 cm

IDR 25,000,000



Atomic Bomb 1 (2022)

Acrylic on canvas
100 x 100 cm

IDR 15,000,000



Atomic Bomb 2 (2022)

Acrylic on canvas
100 x 100 cm

IDR 15,000,000



Atomic Bomb 3 (2022)

Acrylic on canvas
100 x 100 cm

IDR 15,000,000



Shapes (2022)

Linocut ink and acrylic ink
on sketch paper
21 x 30 cm (each)

price by request

FRAGMENTED REALITIES

General Inquiry

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TONES no.6