

## Singapore Art Museum Honors One of Indonesia's Foremost Contemporary Artists

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**SINGAPORE.-** [The Singapore Art Museum](#) (SAM), as part of its initiative to support the development of living artists in Singapore and the region, opened its first of four solo exhibitions for the year – FX Harsono: Testimonies tomorrow. Considered one of Indonesia's foremost contemporary artists, this exhibition marks the first time that a survey of Harsono's artwork, created between 1975 till as recently as 2009, will be presented.



A gallery visitor takes a photo of the installation piece "Rewriting The Erased", part of the collection "FX Harsono: Testimonies", a survey of artwork by Indonesian artist FX Harsono, at the Singapore Art Museum. The exhibition features a collection of work by Harsono, and will be on display until May 9, 2010

Harsono, known for playing a pivotal role in the development of contemporary art in Indonesia, continues to be actively involved in the art scene up till today. FX Harsono: Testimonies traces the shifts in the artist's strategies of representation: from the ground-breaking conceptual works that re-defined art making during the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New Art Movement) of the 1970s; to the politically-charged installations of the 1990s; to the artist's recent investigations into issues of self, identity and personal histories. Visitors to the exhibition will witness the transition from Harsono's earlier political works that critique the regime of power

and oppression in Indonesia , to the more personal pieces of post-1998 where Harsono began to look inward and examine the position of minorities and disenfranchised in Indonesia . His most recent body of works draws on his family history, in an investigative journey that reveals the intersection of the personal with the political.

Any discussion of the history of contemporary art in Indonesia would be incomplete without an examination of FX Harsono's art and practice. Harsono's works are remarkable in that they span four tumultuous decades in Indonesian art and history, and have borne witness to a multitude of changes and upheavals in Indonesian politics, society, and culture. Throughout this time, Harsono has continued to question his role as an artist and his position in society, constantly pushing his art and practice to reflect and engage with new social and cultural contexts.

The Indonesian art world first encountered FX Harsono as a restless young artist in the 1970s. One of the founding members of the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (GSRB) or New Art Movement in 1975, Harsono — together with his GSRB compatriots — was already experimenting with new modes of art-making which incorporated found objects and conceptual approaches. By the 1990s, he had established himself as a force in Indonesian contemporary art, creating powerful installations with strident social commentary. These compelling works, which critiqued the regime of power and oppression in Indonesia, gained critical attention and were widely exhibited abroad.

The closing years of the 1990s were marked by a series of societal shockwaves which reverberated throughout the nation, in particular, the economic meltdown of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis generated a groundswell of public anger. In 1998, this culminated in days of brutal street violence and the fall of Suharto's New Order. Indonesian-Chinese artists like Harsono experienced a profound sense of disillusionment, as the events of May 1998 revealed that the very 'people' he had fought for through his art were just as capable of brutality as the political regime, and worse — these people would turn on each other. With the veneer of control under Suharto's 'strongman' regime removed, the fractures in Indonesian society revealed themselves more painfully than ever, particularly along ethnic lines. It was then that Harsono's art began to look inwards, as the artist intensively scrutinised his identity and place in society.

To date, Harsono has continued to raise troubling questions about the position of minorities and the disenfranchised in Indonesia. His most recent body of work draws on his family history, in an investigative journey that reveals the intersection of the personal with the political.

Driven by his belief that an artist needs to constantly engage with society and its issues, Harsono has consistently navigated the shifting currents of Indonesia's socio-political realities, deftly re-aligning his practice to most effectively address urgent issues in Indonesian society and culture. As such, Harsono is widely respected by the Indonesian art community. His pioneering efforts in the early days of contemporary art's development have paved the way for a new generation of artists who look up to him as an icon. Besides his art practice, Harsono also lectures on Art and Design, and writes regularly about social issues and the development of contemporary art. He continues to nurture and challenge the next generation of artists, and contributes to art discourse and debate in Indonesia.