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Stories and Family History in Sinta Tantra Paintings

[Hendaru Tri Hanggoro](#)



The exhibition "Constellations of Beings" by Sinta Tantra explores Sinta's past in the context of her family's constellation. (ISA Art & Design)

FAMILY is the first place a person starts her life. People grow and develop, tread a new environment outside the family, come into contact with many things, and then may become distant from the family. But no matter how far a person travels, in the end he will return home to his family.

Sinta Tantra is no exception, a Balinese female artist who has pursued her artistic pursuits in three countries: the United States, England, and Indonesia. She uses her family as a source of inspiration for her paintings. All of these works are contained in her solo exhibition entitled *Constellations of Being* at the ISA Art & Design Gallery at Wisma 46, Jakarta.

Held by ISA Art & Design, an art consulting firm and art gallery based in Jakarta, and curated by Doctor Sadiyah Boonstra, this exhibition explores Sinta's past within the context of her family's constellations to create new constellations of history, emotions, and emotions. experience, form, color, and material.

In order to get inspiration for her works, Sinta asked her parents about the history and memorable memories in the family. The result is a collection of beautiful paintings that tell stories about the past, present, and future as well as about the relationship between families or the "constellation" between mother-father-daughter and grandfather-cousins-grandchildren.

"I discovered that my great-grandfather was a very talented person. He is a stone carver or *undagi* in Balinese, which is synonymous with 'architect.' Together with his cousins, he traveled around Bali to earn a living. Both of them worked on intricate stone carvings for the Water Palace in Taman Ujung which was built by the King of Karangasem," said Sinta in the exhibition catalog written by Sadiyah Boonstra.



Deborah Iskandar (Director of ISA Art & Design), Sinta Tantra (center), and Sadiah Boonstra (Curator) in front of the painting *Two Cousins (Batu Bata)*. (ISA Art & Design)

The story of the two is immortalized by Sinta through a painting entitled "*Two Cousins (Batu Brick)*". The painting shows two circles in the center with different colors side by side. On the edge of the painting there are several rectangles.

"Although abstract in composition, the two circles in the middle can be interpreted as two cousins, an illustration of their friendship and brotherhood. 'Batu Bata' refers to a type of Balinese stone or brick, here represented by a rectangular shape," explained Sadiah Boonstra.

Sinta paints using tempera paint on photo linen and uses organic and mineral materials – which she describes as a process of "living and breathing." Lately, she has also looked at the use of gold material, namely by attaching gold leaf sheet after sheet in her paintings.

For her balanced composition, Sinta's works are inspired by past art movements such as Bauhaus, Art Deco, Abstract Expressionism, and Modernism. As for her style, this young artist admitted that she was more inspired by Nyoman Lempad and Sol LeWitt with their two- and three-dimensional lines.

Prior to this exhibition, Sinta conducted in-depth research for more than two years during the pandemic. The inspiration for this solo exhibition was drawn from the silhouettes of tropical leaves against a backdrop of abstract geometric shapes and lines. Here we can see Sinta's efforts to translate the influences that came from European painters such as Henri Matisse and Jean Arp and then merged them with the symbolic forms typical of the Balinese artist, Nyoman Lempad.

"As a person who is in touch with European, American and Indonesian environments, Tantra has a unique multicultural outlook that allows her to combine elements from the different worlds she lives in," added Sadiah.



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It also provides an opportunity for Tantra to carve a career as an independent female artist. This is not a small achievement considering that it is not easy to become an independent female artist in Bali due to challenges in the form of social structure, lack of art infrastructure, and society's expectations of women.

The paintings also explore the sense of belonging and belonging, the fluidity of migration, identity, and the shift from humans to global beings, combining past colonialism with the present to create new topics and ways to see and reconnect with the past.

"I want to connect with people on a level that has transcended words and culture. I have a repertoire of shapes and colors that I can plug and disassemble and a set of rules I can follow or break if needed," says Tantra.

"I'm interested in creating a kind of pressure for the audience of my work in terms of composition and combination; a place where they can find their narrative and where I can find mine," Tantra continues.

Although the visual composition for the majority of her paintings was made with the help of digital devices, to complete the original painting, Tantra still uses the manual method by hand, which she does in the studio, involving good preparation.

Well, for those of you who are interested in finding inspiration and studying works of art, this exhibition should be included in your visit schedule. The exhibition runs from August 6 to September 30, 2022. (dru)

Author : [Hendaru Tri Hanggoro](#)  [Hendaru Tri Hanggoro](#)