FROM CULTURAL ACTIVISM TO COUNTER MEMORIAL:
THE ARTWORK OF DADANG CHRISTANTO 1975 - 2005

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I hereby declare that the work herein, now submitted as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts the Charles Darwin University, is the result of my own investigations and all references to ideas and work of other researchers have been specifically acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being currently submitted in candidature for any other degree.
ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that historical, political, cultural gaps and misunderstanding circulate around Indonesian /Australian artist Dadang Christanto. Christanto, born in 1957 in Tegal in central Java of Chinese parentage, is one of Indonesia's foremost contemporary artists who has garnered widespread critical acclaim in the international art arena since the early 1990s. He is primarily known for performances, installations, paintings and drawings. Dadang has since 1999 resided in Australia after accepting a lecturing position at the local Darwin University. Interpretative limitations have allowed mythologised and romanticised representations to prevail within an Australian perspective and context. In this thesis I argue for more dynamic and complex interpretations that examine Christanto's cultural production as a considered shift from political activism to counter memorial. The dissertation aims to contribute to understanding and knowledge about Dadang Christanto, bridging a gap between the artist's formative context in Indonesia, his dynamic experience of migration and the critical response in Australia.

This dissertation adopts an interdisciplinary methodology grounded in history, art history and cultural studies to provide a complex theoretical framework of the assertions. This multidisciplinary approach is intended to challenge existing interpretations as well as opening up new avenues of inquiry. The foremost point to make is that postmodern acknowledges the importance of biography and ethnicity.
Such a postmodern framework allows the researcher to retain the focus on a single artist but in contrast with earlier art historical models, which focused on the myth of the artist as heroic genius: the events of Christanto's life story are viewed in a wider cultural social political context. Consequently the ‘voice’ of Christanto is crucial to this thesis. Extensive interviews with the artist are the means by which I have been able to address limitations in the critical response to Christanto. Moreover, theories of diaspora are crucial to my thesis and a means by which Dadang Christanto's biography is placed into a wider context.

My dissertation posits that omissions and misunderstanding which surround Christanto occur at three critical junctures. First, the restricted understanding of Christanto's lived experience and formative years in Indonesia, second a limited understanding of Christanto's migrant experience and its influence on his art practice and third a gap in understanding evident in the critical response to Christanto by critics and curators associated with cultural and collecting institutions.

The coalescing of particular circumstance in Australia enables Christanto to begin addressing his familial history. In my analysis, Christanto is also crucially concerned with a universal aspect that allows his work to be understood and appreciated not simply as political activism but in terms of the postmodern idea of the counter memorial.
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### ABBREVIATIONS / GLOSSARY

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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>ANU</td>
<td>Australian National University</td>
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<tr>
<td>APT</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Triennial</td>
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<td>ARX</td>
<td>Artist's Regional Exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Charles Darwin University</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISI</td>
<td>Institut Seni Indonesia. Founded on 23 July 1984 replaced the Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia (ASRI, Indonesia Academy of Art)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEKRA</td>
<td>Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat (Institute of People's Culture)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAGNT</td>
<td>Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory</td>
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<td>NGA</td>
<td>National Gallery of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>PKI</td>
<td>Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party).</td>
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<tr>
<td>QAG</td>
<td>Queensland Art Gallery</td>
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis offers new insights and a broader understanding for the internationally acclaimed Indonesian / Australian artist, Dadang Christanto. In a little over a decade from 1991 - 2003 Dadang Christanto emerged from relative obscurity to international recognition. But Eurocentric paradigms have restricted the reception to Dadang Christanto. In this thesis I argue for reinterpretation of Dadang Christanto and his artwork from cultural activism to counter memorial.

Christanto is primarily known for his performances, installations, paintings and drawings. At sixteen years of age he attended art school in Yogyakarta. At the time there was much art activity engaged in the community addressing social concerns. Christanto was involved in many of the activities of this era including the activism which opposed the authoritarian rule of the New Order regime. In his formative years the life of Dadang Christanto was changed, like many of his countrymen, by pervasive political events. His parents were traders and of Chinese ethnicity and Dadang’s father was abducted and believed killed in the ‘communist purges’ of 1965 when Dadang was eight years of age. In such tragic circumstance Christanto is viewed through his life story and his work read as political activism. The outcome has been a failure to engage in depth with the aim and intent of Christanto's work and restricted critical analysis. He is represented in a fixed context of an artist in exile with a tragic past - a position supported by the western paradigms of the artist as tragic hero and exotic other. I argue that Eurocentric paradigms have created gaps, misunderstandings and occlusions around the artist allowing mythologised and romanticised representations to prevail. In this thesis I argue for more dynamic and complex interpretations that examine Christanto's cultural production. In order to undercut these cultural constructions the thesis seeks to examine the particular historical context and material circumstances for the artist Dadang Christanto and how his art developed in response to his lived experiences.
Gaps, misunderstandings and occlusions occur around the three critical junctures:
Christanto's lived experience and formative years in Indonesia; the limited understanding of Christanto's migrant experience and its influence on his art practice; and the critical and institutional responses to Christanto in Australia. They provide sites for interrogation in this dissertation and allow me to argue to a critical reappraisal of the artist’s practice as a considered shift from cultural activism to counter memorial.

In order to address these problems this dissertation provides an in depth examination of Christanto's life in Indonesia, experience of migration and critical response to the artist's work. In the first section of the thesis my aim is to contribute to an understanding and knowledge by bridging a gap between the artist's formative context in Indonesia and the critical response in Australia. Dadang Christanto was born in Tegal in Central Java in 1957 and received his art training in Indonesia's 'cultural capital', yet there is a sense in which little attention has been given to the artist's oeuvre prior to migration to Australia in 1999. In the first section of this thesis I have sought to make available context for Christanto's earliest artwork and that of the artist himself. In focusing on two artworks from the period, the performance Earth man (1992 - 1996) and the sculpture series Kekerasan (1995) we begin to observe the contrasts between Indonesian and Australian responses to Christanto’s oeuvre.

The second section of the thesis focuses upon diasporic theory to examine the impact of migration on Christanto. Theories of diaspora are crucial to my thesis and a means by which Dadang Christanto's biography is placed into a wider context. More recent diasporas are often culturally creative, socially dynamic and can often have a romantic notion of their experience and homelands. These notions are central to my re-evaluation of Dadang Christanto in that his experiences (both in Indonesia and migrant experience) are commonly represented by others as overly traumatic and seen in somewhat reductive negative ways. I will explore how the migrant experience is expressed in the themes and stylistic development of Christanto's artwork and will focus in depth on the first two major artworks undertaken by Christanto following his migration in Australia: Red rain (1999 - 2001) and Count project (1999 - 2004).
The third section of the thesis examines the critical debate concerning Christanto's work in Australia. What do the written reviews of Christanto's exhibitions in Australia reveal about the gaps in understanding? The extraordinary level of interest in Southeast Asia in the early 1990s provides a context for the analysis of three key exhibitions by Christanto in Australia from 1991 - 2003. I propose that recognition for Christanto in particular and contemporary Southeast Asian art more generally is predicated on a growing museological awareness on the part of Australian writers, curators and critics. From the outset Christanto is seen in the context of postmodernism, postcolonialism and the new museology which swept through museums and galleries in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. The new museology argued for a more pluralistic approach, to cultural and collecting institutions where meanings were open ended and more engaged with the community in contrast with earlier monolithic models and approaches to national collections. An important aspect of the new museology strategies in an Australian context was the incorporation of Australia within a wider geographical Asia - Pacific region.

At the same time a need exists to test the ideals of the new museology against the reality of contemporary museums. In this dissertation I test these debates against the evidence from the reception to Dadang Christanto. I argue that although there is growing awareness which created the opportunity for Christanto's critical acclaim there is a gap between the rhetoric and reality. My analysis of the single artwork, the performance piece *Litsus: portrait of a family* (2003) at the Australian National Gallery (NGA) demonstrates both the new insights and growing appreciation for Christanto’s work, as well as the tensions and misunderstandings that inform this cross cultural exchange.

Whereas Christanto's early performance and installations in the 1990s were viewed through the rubric of political art by the turn of the century the Indonesian art critic and curator Hendro Wiyanto (2002) used the term counter memorial to evoke this aspect of Christanto's artwork. The notion of the counter memorial emerges as crucial in providing a more complex understanding of Christanto's cultural production.
Theoretical framework

This thesis is primarily grounded in a postmodern and postcolonial framework. Postmodernism is a wide ranging movement which emerged in the 1970s and 1980s which in essence contains a critique of modernism, a concern with centre / periphery relations, a reassessment of regional differences in the style and development of modernism and an emphasis on ethnic and cultural difference. The foremost point to make is that postmodernism acknowledges the importance of biography and ethnicity. Such a postmodern framework allows me to retain the focus on a single artist but in contrast with earlier art historical models, which focused on the myth of the artist as heroic genius, the events of Christanto's life story are located in a wider cultural, social and political context. Griselda Pollock's (1980) critique of this art historical tradition demonstrates the way in which the art object is read through the narrative life story of the artist, typically of unknown or lowly origins who achieves great fame, but whose life is marred by tragedy. In relation to this mythology, we can see that response to Christanto remains narrowly focused on the tragic victim and fails to move forward with Christanto and in response to international events towards new interpretations for his artwork.

From a postmodern perspective my aim is to relocate Dadang Christanto not as 'genius' but within the context of ethnic and regional differences and globalising cultural flows. As Janet Wolff (1981) demonstrates, meaning is not invested in the art work at the point of production, rather meanings are made and remade in the process of cultural construction through a complex process of production, marketing and reception passing through the agency of 'the artist' 'the artwork' and 'the viewer / reader'. Critical discourse essentially resulted in a phase in late modernism which avoided or erased the context of the personal. However I argue that the revisionist focus on the individual’s life history offered in this thesis is crucial to understanding Christanto and genres such as installations and performance art.

Postcolonialism posits that a so called 'clash of cultures' can impact as much upon the coloniser as the colonised and is not simply a case of the oppressor obliterating the oppressed. Postcolonialism accommodates alternative histories and standpoints and the mutuality of the process in attempting to comprehend this complex relationship. The postcolonial critique of Said is crucial to my thesis.
The work of writers such as Edward Said (1979) assist in understanding the way in which Christanto's identity was initially constructed and became a framework for more complex readings. Said proposed that the 'western' understanding of 'other' cultures remains built on a colonial vision that even today continues to support an unnatural binary of 'us' and the 'other'. Said in *Orientalism* cites numerous western sources which represent the non-western exotic other in dehumanising ways and observes that

we note immediately . . . an aura of apartness, definiteness, and collective self-consistency such as to wipe out any traces of individual . . . with narratable life histories (Said 1979 229).

In so doing Said argues that dominant narratives unwittingly further the continuation of 'face-less' and 'story-less' individuals. Said's critique is very persuasive and enables us to see how these stereotypes have unconsciously operated in the critical response to Christanto as exotic other coupled with tragic hero. Nevertheless the problem with Said's hypothesis is that it is too hermetic and appears to confirm Eurocentric stereotypes by exaggerating differences and polarising east / west relationships offering no alternatives (Young 1990 127). Most particularly Said fails to retrieve historical agency for individuals. In order to address these problems there is a need for studies like that which I have undertaken which focus on regional differences and individual experiences of cross cultural exchange within the discourses of otherness.

Following on from Said, Homi Bhabha rejected this binary vision of 'us' and 'other'. In *Cultural diversity and cultural differences* (1995) he posits that an inherent purity and originality of cultures is 'untenable' and offers as an alternative the 'Third Space of Enunciation'. In putting forth this notion Bhabha proposed 'that we will find those words with which we can speak of "ourselves" and "others"' (Bhabha 1995 209). Both Bhabha’s and Said’s propositions are relevant here in that they assist in understanding the way in which Christanto's identity was initially constructed and his cultural production (mis)interpreted. In this way we can see how without any historical context, Christanto's story might be called on to stand in for 'every' Indonesian. However it is not simply a matter of replacing Said's binarisms and stereotypes with a celebration of Bhabha's hybridity; the situation is more complex than this.
While Bhabha's ideas of hybridity and the third space offer an important and useful means of intervening in the binarisms of the west, to replace this with a celebration of hybridity is not possible. In my hypothesis Christanto is not a victim of circumstance but he is better seen as a dynamic historical agent whose identity is historically located, complicated and conditional.

In undertaking this project I therefore acknowledge the insights provided by historians such as Edward Thompson (1963) Reynaldo Iletto (1979) and Eric Wolf (1982) who have posited the notions of a 'people without a history' and 'history from below'. Increasingly history is focused on the lives of marginalised others, women and ethnic minorities rather than the grand narratives written from the viewpoint of the victor. Concerned with historicity, as opposed to the biography of individual stories, it is of relevance here in that these writers challenged the viewing of nations as isolated and coherent entities. In so doing these writers took an important stance against ascribing the framework of modern nation states backwards through time as an acceptable framework of historical inquiry. This hypothesis lends support for my research identifying the imperative need to consider the particular historical experiences of Christanto.

I also draw upon diasporic theory to account for Christanto's migration experiences. Theories of diaspora are crucial to my thesis and a means by which Dadang Christanto's biography is placed into a wider context. In recent years diaspora has come to the attention of many writers investigating globalisation and migration such as Paul Gilroy (1997), Steven Vertovec (1998), Nikos Papastergiadis (2000) and Ien Ang (2003). These commentators have established that most present-day peoples belonging to self described diasporas have not necessarily been forced into exile and therefore do not necessarily possess the traumatised, melancholic aspects once associated with the archetypal Jewish, African or Armenian diasporas. More recent diasporas, as Vertovec (1998) affirms, are culturally creative, socially dynamic and can often have a romantic notion of their experience and homelands. These notions are central to my re-evaluation of Dadang Christanto in that his experiences (both in Indonesia and migrant experience) are commonly represented by others as overly traumatic and seen in somewhat reductive negative ways. By contrast I argue that Christanto's migration experiences are framed by him as essentially positive.
Critical writings by Ang (2003), Dean Chan (2000 and 2004) and Melissa Chiu (2000 and 2003) amongst others provide a broader background of the Asian migrants' and Asian Australian artists' experiences. This raises the question, what was the condition of Australia and more specifically Darwin that tempered, nuanced and impacted Christanto's migration experience?

Postmodernism has also incorporated a critique of modernism. This acknowledges that the rise of ‘modernity’ and the ways in which modernity was experienced, synthesised and created can be broadly characterised, yet modernity is ultimately unique to the cultural, social, political and historical circumstances of any one time and place. In the 1970s Australia turned away from an international modernism partly in acknowledgement that modernism has its own distinctive regional trajectories. This coincided with a growing interest in Southeast Asia and in cultural identity and ethnicity and emergence of contemporary Indigenous art in Australia. In this regard we can see how two spheres each located on the periphery engaged in dialogue. The reassessment of regional trajectories which followed, supported a critical context and an entirely new approach to artists by museums: interest in personal biography, cultural identity, and genres such as installations and performance art.

I further contextualise my examination of the Australian reception to Christanto in relation to the new museology which swept through museums and galleries in the 1980s and 1990s. The new museology, as British theorist Ivan Karp (1991) observes, argued for a new, more pluralistic approach, for cultural and collecting institutions where meanings were open ended and more engaged with the community in contrast with earlier monolithic models and approaches to national collections. An important aspect of the new museology strategies in an Australian context was the incorporation of Australia within a wider geographical Asia - Pacific region. The *Asia Pacific Triennial* (APT) was undoubtedly a foremost initiative of this strategy.
Dramatic shifts in the collections and displays of institutions encompassed within the new museology created a critical and curatorial space in which meanings for Dadang Christanto and his work could occur, together with other Southeast Asian artists. In many ways the new museology which emerged in the late twentieth century responded to contemporary world events and the changing nature of historical enquiry.

At the same time a need exists to test the ideals of the new museology against the reality of the critical response to Dadang Christanto. In this dissertation I examine these debates against the evidence of the reception to Dadang Christanto. I argue that although there is growing awareness which created the opportunity for Christanto's critical acclaim there is a gap between the rhetoric and reality (Philp 1999, Karp 1991 and 2006). I will examine how and why misunderstandings have occurred in Australia and propose broader more complex framework for the artist and his artwork. The thesis necessarily involves a critique of new museology because, despite the acclaim for Dadang Christanto, there are fissures / limitations in the critical response which only serve to confirm the limitations of new museology and the degree to which insights are constrained by the conventions of our own cultural perspective. Key reception theorist Roland Barthes (1972) acknowledged the contested interpretations of an artwork and raised questions about the 'ideal viewer'. Whilst affirming that the 'reader / viewer' who is familiar with the codes employed in the 'text' will have a fuller richer 'reading' experience, he conceded that there is no such thing as an ideal viewer. Is an Australian audience the 'perfect match' for the 'codes' of the artist, artwork and the reader / viewer? What do the written reviews of Christanto's exhibitions in Australia reveal about the gaps in understanding?

In relation to these issues we need to acknowledge the lack of knowledge about Indonesia in Australia. Existing literature has failed to fully address nuanced readings of localised differences between Indonesian and western art practices. In hindsight, the Australian art world very quickly perceived themselves as experts in the area of Southeast Asia and on a par with Indonesia and international commentators - a typical provincial response.
The complexity of artistic and institutional responses to cultural differences in the approach to performance art is just one example where shared experiences create the appearance of dialogue but in fact culturally the genre is understood and operates from two different perspectives. In Australia performance art was a very radical movement which altered the perception of the art world but largely remained part of the art elite. By comparison with western audiences, in Indonesia contemporary performance and installation art is widely understood and appreciated by society at large. As we will see initially little understanding of Southeast Asian contemporary art was viewed in Australia but crucially artists' initiatives worked to change this. In the meantime performance art and installation in general terms prepared the ground for Christanto's reception in Australia by broadening definitions of art and met the need for radical politicised art form.

The concept of the counter memorial is therefore central to my thesis. In a contemporary postmodern era the process of cultural revival and revisionist histories have resulted in new cultural practices concerned with political critique, hidden histories, and personal experience and therefore produce very different art - in style, content and technique. In the process the monument is transformed to explore a more complex and contested role often embodying an anti-heroic, ironic and self-effacing stance (Young 2000 and 2007). Aesthetically figurative bronzes were replaced with conceptual installations. The theories of the counter memorial emerge as crucial in providing a more complex understanding of Christanto's cultural production. Most particularly the counter memorial seeks to be more inclusive representing 'history from below', ethnic minorities, hidden histories, and dark moments in the life of a nation. In so doing a dramatic shift occurred in the policies of cultural institutions: allowing recognition for art that was politically engaged created the opportunity for dialogue between the artist and the wider public. In this context of counter memorial, I explore parallels between the artwork of Christanto and contemporary Indigenous art. Ideas of the counter memorial provide a more complex understanding of the critical response to Dadang Christanto in which his artwork shifted over the 1990s from cultural activism to speak less of specific events in Indonesia and increasingly of a universal concern with the experience of loss and grief. In this way I argue that Christanto’s work can be seen to move from cultural activism to embody the idea of the counter memorial in an institutional setting.
Literature review

It is of crucial importance to acknowledge the Indonesian writers who are the first to write about Dadang Christanto and in one sense offer a uniquely Indonesian perspective. Art historian and curator Jim Supangkat places the artist within an art historical framework and later curator and writer Hendro Wiyanto uses the term counter memorial. But it is also the case that these Indonesian accounts were not readily available in translations so their viewpoints are not accessible to an English speaking audience until later collaborations. Hendro Wiyanto and Jim Supangkat as well as FX Harsono and Dwi Marianto are the key contributors concerning Christanto's oeuvre who have written in Indonesian journals such as *Tempo*, *Majalah Seni Rupa (Visual Arts Magazine)* and *Latitudes* spanning the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. Their commentary also appears in Indonesian newspapers *Kompas*, *Jakarta Post* and in provincial or specialised papers such as *Gatra* and *Umnat*. Many of these writers have also contributed powerful essays to Christanto's exhibition catalogues for both solo and group shows in Indonesia. Most notably Hendro Wiyanto in *Unspeakable Horror*, Bentara Budaya Jakarta, July 2002, provided sound scholarship on memory and forgetting in the artist's oeuvre. It was in this publication that the term counter memorial was coined by him in relation to Christanto's art practice. However these writings were and are not generally available in English translation thereby minimising their impact and accounting for the sense in which the artist's oeuvre prior to migration in 1999 is under represented in English language accounts accessible to Australian audiences. In the first section of this thesis I have sought to make available a context for Christanto's earliest artwork and that of the artist himself.

The first monographs in English providing a general survey of Indonesian art appeared in the 1990s (Fischer 1990). However *Soul Spirit Mountain* (1994) by Canadian art historian Astri Wright is generally acknowledged to be the foremost major English language survey of Indonesian art, providing an account of artists' activities in the independence movement and concluding with current practice of the time. In this publication the author accounted for contemporary art practice addressing social and political issues. Australian art historian Brita Miklouho-Maklai is emblematic of an emerging generation of in-county scholars having lived in Indonesia for sometime during her postgraduate research.
In 1991 Miklouho-Maklai was invited to write the catalogue essay for Christanto's first solo exhibition in Adelaide and in 1996 she published her doctoral thesis *Exposing society's wounds: some aspects of Contemporary Indonesian Art since 1996*. Other English language dissertations which provide some analysis of Dadang Christanto and his work include that of Astri Wright (1991), Australians Michelle Antoinette (1998) and Sue Ingham (forthcoming) and American Amanda Rath (forthcoming). Each of these writers provide important thematic surveys of contemporary Indonesian practice but to date there has been no single monograph focusing in depth on the developments of Dadang Christanto in the sustained way that is possible here.

At the commencement of Christanto's career in Australia in 1991 several writers point to the vacuum in which Christanto's cultural production occurs (Radok 1991, Ward 1991, Dudley 1991 and Megaw 1991). Some of these same reservations are expressed two years later when, in 1993 Queensland Art Gallery staged the APT, the first in what was deliberately framed as a series of programs held over a decade the APT aimed at building a critical dialogue around contemporary Asian art. But very quickly this gap in knowledge and understanding is overlooked. Later in this literature review I posit reasons for this distinctively Australian response.

Caroline Turner and Christine Clark are two key Australian art historians who have contributed to the interpretation of Dadang Christanto and his oeuvre in an Australian context and both have written several major catalogue essays published in Australia and Indonesia. Beginning with the influential APT catalogues in 1993 and 1999 and more recently *Di ujung kelopak daunya tetap ada air mata (On the edge of the petal there are still tears)* in 2005. Furthermore Turner and Christine Clark's activity deserves particular credit for providing institutional agency for the understanding of Christanto's works. In addition to the APT, key exhibitions include *Echoes of Home* (2003) and *Witnessing to Silence* (2005) and *Art and Social Change: contemporary art in the Asia and Pacific* (2005) where Dadang Christanto and his oeuvre are more broadly contextualised in relation to specific local and regional perspectives. In general terms, in the sustained commentaries of Turner and Christine Clark we observe that the reception to Christanto's work is not held totally captive to stereotypes around notions of the other.
One of the gaps in understanding which I address is the cultural production surrounding Christanto's identity which has delivered in more general texts of a journalistic nature a general belief that Christanto is a political refugee whose life was endangered in Indonesia. In recent years the collaborative efforts of Hendro Wiyanto, Christine Clark, Binghui Huangfu and Turner have done much to present Dadang Christanto in focused exhibitions such as *Unspeakable Horror* (2002), *Echoes of Home* (2005), *Open Letter* (2005) and *Witnessing to Silence*, which contributed to public knowledge and a critical context. The exhibitions *Echoes of Home* and *Open Letter* featured artists' migrant experiences from Asia to Australia and considered the impact of these artists having made Australia their home and how it has impacted upon their creative output. At the same time there is a sense in which the exhibitions have unwittingly lent support to a process of mythologising by focusing on the tragic life events of the artist. In this thesis I maintain that diasporic theory recuperates value for the artist, from which we can acknowledge a more complex understanding of the intercultural.

The formal, thematic and contextual issues raised by these writers are very important and provide the basis upon which this dissertation builds. However, over and above these major writers a great deal of the existing literature on Christanto is largely journalistic in style and content and necessarily limited in scope. Alternatively it takes the form of catalogue essays that focus on a discreet body of work or the acquisition of a specific artwork. It is in this generally understood response to Dadang Christanto where omissions and misunderstandings prevail and there is a failure to go further and deliver in depth critical analysis.

There is also considerable literature concerning Christanto's oeuvre arising from the acquisition of his artworks into public gallery collections in Australia, Queensland Art Gallery (Elliot 1993), Art Gallery of New South Wales (Seiz 2005), Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (Gray 2003) and National Gallery of Australia (Maxwell 2003). However such institutional publications typically take the form of online interpretative and education materials related specifically to the collection pieces. In the absence of publicly held national collections in an Indonesian context the collection of private collector Dr Oei Hong Djien assumes an imperative role.
An account of this collection is published in *Exploring modern Indonesian Art* (2003) by Helena Spanjaard in which Christanto's early pieces, the painting *About the heart* (1996) and the sculpture *Kekerasan (Violence)* feature.

In this thesis I build and expand on what has been done in the field focusing on the key writers and the most crucial publications in the period under examination in this thesis 1991 - 2003 in which Christanto emerges to national and international acclaim. There are omissions misinterpretations and problems apparent which need to be addressed, particularly in regard to Christanto where the critical response has tended to view the artist through a stereotypical and romanticised response. Implicit in the writing concerning Dadang Christanto is that his experience (both in Indonesia and Australia) are commonly represented as overly traumatised. In the response to Christanto's migration the problem is that Christanto is generally perceived in tragic terms as a victim but this interpretation fails to account for the artist's own characterisation of the experience. In asserting this misrepresentation it is important to acknowledge that a lived experience is a subjective process of identity, memory and forgetting (McAdams 2006).³ It is not my intention here to quantify those experiences. The point here is that Christanto's lived experience, in the process of being condensed in the context of exhibition reviews, catalogue essays and articles is represented in a reductive, essentialised form. Conversely, in later articles his participation and positive contribution within the Australian art community is typically overlooked. The propensity to essentialise Christanto is possibly compounded in an Australian context where plural identities within the population have been usurped to a historically privileged Australian homogenous, Anglo Saxon identity.⁴ Or as Ien Ang (2003) has put it, cultural difference is portrayed as threatening despite 'the fact that it is everywhere'. Contested identities are crucial to understanding Christanto and a way in which interpretations can move beyond a totalising and essentialising reading of both artist and artwork.

In retrospect we can see that, in itself, this essentialising has created a bias toward Southeast Asian artists who address issues of social justice and human rights.
There is evidence of a selective view of artists from the Southeast Asian region represented abroad favouring those artists concerned with social justice and environmental issues. Many other fine artists, working outside this arena, were rarely selected, for example in the APT series. This is a serious matter for consideration, which has further implications for the response to Christanto but it lies outside the scope of this thesis. The point is that for Christanto, the outcome is a static interpretation that remains superficially focused on the social justice and political issues. Thus despite the growing recognition for Southeast Asian art activity, commentators assert that insufficient critical analysis has followed the novel new interest (Lee Weng Choy 2004). An expectation therefore arises of a more focussed and increasingly rigorous, critical awareness that moves beyond discourse on cultural identity discourse and the narrow focus on the 'new exoticism' of social-political issues in discussion of contemporary Southeast Asian art. These limitations and oversights justify the postmodernist perspective adopted in this thesis which engenders a concern with centre / periphery relations and a reassessment of regional differences in relation to modernism. It raises the question to what degree is the critical and institutional response to Christanto informed by an idealised multiculturalism and new political and cultural engagement with Southeast Asia? As I will show, problems are apparent in the cultural production surrounding Christanto because apart from scholars in the area few were knowledgeable in Indonesian art history or understood the recent events in Indonesian history.

**Growing recognition for Southeast Asian art**

The omissions in the understanding for Christanto evolved in part through a lack of understanding and knowledge of contemporary art from the region. Until recently Southeast Asian art was overwhelmingly displayed as works of antiquity rather than contemporary art. As anthropologist Anthony Forge (1993) has argued in relation to Balinese painting, the emphasis on antiquities can be understood as originating in and perpetuated by a colonial vision. The resulting scholarly tradition assumed that cultures of the Asian region were based on a glorious past civilisation of which the present culture was merely a decadent remnant.
It has been argued by Vishakha Desai that often western audiences considered antiquities more authentic because they 'mirrored their expectation of what Asian artefacts should look like: distant, timeless, quiet and elegant' (Desai 1995 169). Through exhibitions, collections, publishing and forums of contemporary art there exists generally today awareness in urban art centres worldwide of the practice emanating from the Southeast Asian region. I address these dramatic shifts in the collections and displays of institutions encompassed within the new museology that created a critical and curatorial space in which meanings for Dadang Christanto and his work could occur, and interrogate where the omissions remain.

Art journals such as *Art Asia Pacific, Artlink, Eyeline* and *Art Monthly* and forums such as John Clark's groundbreaking conference *Modernity and Post Modernity in Asian Art* at ANU in 1991 have contributed to increased awareness of postmodernism and its rejection of international modernism in favour of regionalism. This paradigm shift is evident in Australia through the efforts of a growing core of artists, curators, critics and scholars with insights and knowledge of contemporary art from the Asia-Pacific region. It is beyond the scope of the literature review to examine all of these individuals and institutions in detail but my intention here is to make apparent the different positions and agendas that emerge. *Modernity in Asian Art* (1993) in particular worked to radically shift the perception of critics and curators in Australia and marks a radical break with earlier perceptions of Southeast Asia viewed in relation to the exotic and non-contemporary art. As John Clark demonstrated, the critical issue was that the regional nature of modernism was overlooked for Southeast Asia. However Clark’s interests lay more with postmodernism generally and did not focus in depth on Indonesia.

The APT (beginning 1993) at the Queensland Art Gallery reflected new policies for the collection and display of contemporary Southeast Asian art. At the same time many other galleries expanded their collections to reflect a growing interest in Southeast Asia: National Gallery of Australia, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Art Gallery of New South Wales.
The 1990s also witnessed the formation of Australian government agencies such as Asialink (established in 1990) and the contribution made by leading curators and writers such as Apinan Poshyananda in Thailand and Radok, Turner, Christine Clark and artist Pat Hoffie in Australia. Some of the gaps in knowledge I have identified are also reflected in the art world's oversight of the activities of local Asian Australian artists.

In tracking a history of growing recognition for Southeast Asian art we can observe the agency of Australian artists who were calling for and initiating greater exchange with Southeast Asia through ARX. But in addition it is important to acknowledge the contribution of Asian Australian artists through the axis of activity and critical engagement evident at Gallery 4A in Sydney (established in 1997), an artist run space dedicated to providing exposure for Asian Australian artists. Whilst embodying very different positions, the growing interest on the part of academics, artists, critics, galleries and museums is marked against a historically limited interaction with Asia. Whilst this broader context for contemporary Southeast Asian artists was imperative for foreign audiences, British art historian David Clarke (2002) points out that there remains insufficient foreign and domestic art historical scholarship concerning Southeast Asia. Such observations confirm the pressing need for focussed research such as that which I have undertaken.

It is important to acknowledge that, simultaneously with the growing focus on Southeast Asian contemporary art, came an extraordinary efflorescence of interest in the Southeast Asian region. Indeed the flurry of activity and advances made in the 1990s is so acute as to warrant characterising it as ‘the Southeast Asian decade’. This heightened consciousness can be related in part to what Australian curator James Bennett's (1996) termed the ‘institutional rush’ of the late 1990s, ignited by the Hawke - Keating government’s vision of Australia’s place in the Southeast Asian region (Fink 2002). The halcyon days of Hawke - Keating rapprochement with Indonesia and overture to Southeast Asia is of interest in this thesis because it locates artists such as Christanto within a broader cultural, political and social context. The focus on Southeast Asia in Australia as part of Prime Minister Keating's 'big picture', included items such as Australia becoming a republic, achieving reconciliation with Indigenous Australians and further economic and cultural engagement with Asia.
In general terms Keating’s engagement with Asia was received at the time in positive terms but by 1993 his platform of reforms was met with growing resistance and multiculturalism, a key reform agenda, was already on the wane in the public domain. Keating biographer Edna Cavew (1991) and ex-staffer Don Watson (2002) recognized that, in some regards, the political context in Australia was tied to Prime Minister Keating’s fortunes making the belated recognition for Southeast Asia somewhat compromised. Over the course of the 1990s a radical change in the Australian political context transpires - drastic changes which impact on Dadang Christanto and the reception to his work. The environment significantly changes from the left-leaning, Labour Federal Government lead by Prime Minister Paul Keating (1991 - 1996) to that of Prime Minister John Howard (1996 - 2007). Moreover local relationships would be overtaken by a succession of major international events, including cataclysmic events transpiring in Indonesia. On November 12, 1991, Indonesian military fired upon Timorese pro-Independence demonstrators in Dili, killing between 60 - 180 people. The events were widely broadcasted in Australian media and elicited Australian sympathies especially on account of the earlier deaths of four Australian journalists in Balibo, Timor in 1975. The events were and are ongoing: the hi-jacked aircraft and terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the war in Iraq, Australia's contribution in the 'war on terror' as an ally of the United States of America's 'coalition of the willing' and the terrorist bombings in Bali of 2002 and 2005, all of which have served to fracture international relations. In relation to the ‘Southeast Asian decade’, debate surrounds the relationship between foreign affairs and parallel advances in the art world. While some critics such as Apinan Poshyananda (1993) have argued foreign affairs and trade drove this new interest in Southeast Asian art the situation is very complex and there is evidence of both mutual and disparate interests. I take up these debates in greater detail later in the thesis (see Part Three).

In order to address these omissions and misunderstandings in the critical response to Dadang Christanto, it is important to understand the historical relationship between Australia and Indonesia. Following on from Said (1979) many writers have pointed to the reductive view of Asia that is known to exist in Australia.
Curator James Bennett (2001), academics Tim Lindsey (2002) and Adrian Vickers (2006), and former senior employee of the Australian Foreign Affairs department Neil Manton (2003) have, from very different positions, pointed to a basic lack of understanding in Australian society, both past and present, regarding the social, political and cultural circumstances of Southeast Asia generally and Indonesia in particular - Australia’s immediate neighbour 600 kilometres to the north with a population of 234 million.

This has resulted in an implicitness of commentary from Australia on political events in Indonesia where few Australian art writers or art historians have undertaken field work. In commenting on atrocities undertaken in foreign countries, when its own record on human rights and social justice in relation to its own Indigenous peoples represented a tragic failure, Australian has left itself open to accusations of hypocrisy and double standards. For this reason, as part of my thesis it has been imperative to examine parallel developments within Australia in relation to the recognition of Australia’s First Nation people. As Paul Battersby (2004 14) points out, this historically limited understanding came to the fore in the late twentieth century fuelled by a highly politicised relationship between Australia and Indonesia. I argue where others have not, that the cultural production of meaning for Christanto and his artwork cannot be adequately understood without taking into account the wider context of the these global circumstances.

**Indonesian context**

This thesis is focused on the cultural production of Christanto in an overview of his artwork in the period 1975 - 2005 with a specific assessment of the Australian response in the period 1991 - 2003. Necessarily the thesis focuses on the life of the artist. In order to contribute to an understanding and knowledge about Dadang Christanto and bridge the gap between the artist's formative years in Indonesia and critical response in Australia, it is crucial to understand the political, social and historical context for Christanto in Indonesia to provide a context in which to understand Christanto. In 1965 President Suharto seized power from his predecessor President Sukarno 1945 - 1967 the first president of Indonesia.
For over three decades during Suharto’s New Order regime (1966 - 1998) Indonesia experienced much needed industrialisation and economic growth. During the cold war era, the New Order delivered avowedly anti-Communist and stable governance which garnered economic and diplomatic support of several western governments including Australia. But Suharto’s militaristic regime also had a reputation for corruption, nepotism, oppression of ethnic minorities and industrial development at the expense of the poor. Christanto’s family of Chinese descent directly experienced the racism and oppression of the Suharto regime.

Amidst the pervasive political and social unrest in Indonesia, Christanto’s father disappeared - presumably seized by military personnel. The imprisonments, torture and disappearance or death of countless people from this 1965 - 1966 period remains unaccounted. During the rule of the New Order in general terms Australia can be seen to turn a 'blind eye' to the abhorrent practices of regime in favour of regional stability. However it should be pointed out that the censorship imposed by Suharto’s regime contributed to the lack of knowledge and engagement by the broader Australian public without any historical political and cultural context for Indonesia. This political context for Dadang Christanto is covered in greater detail in Part One.

This thesis will also address the historiography of Indonesian contemporary art and place Christanto's oeuvre within this context. A regional context for Indonesian modernism is crucial to furthering understanding for Dadang Christanto and must be understood in detail as part of the broader context for this thesis. As in Australia, modernism in Indonesia assumed its own regional trajectory arising from and in reaction to local conditions. Indonesian art historian Jim Supungkat (1993 48) has observed that the slow recognition of 'western art' during colonial rule (c1500 - 1945) in (what was to become) Indonesia, led to an emphasis on a range of conflicting issues: theoretical cultural debate, a confrontation between eastern and western values and a focus on the search for a national or 'eastern' identity.12

In Indonesia modernism developed somewhat independently of existing cultural traditions and in tandem with colonisation. Following Indonesian independence in 1945, an anti western sentiment prevailed expressed as ambivalence to international modernism and the governmental directives from Presidents Sukarno and Suharto.
Within this historical and political background amidst the atmosphere of rising Indonesian nationalism, painting was considered an important element in the struggle against colonialism (Soemantri 1998). The end of the colonial rule was a grim experience especially for those with limited resources and power.

The increasing poverty and demands of the colonial government, the conflict of the Second World War, Japanese occupation, allied invasion, threat of Dutch administration returning and the looming struggle for Indonesian independence combined to create a period of ongoing instability and immense hardship (Turner 2005 200). Generally artists aligned along ideological lines adding an intensity and purpose to their organisational programs and artistic work (Wright 1998 56).

Inspired by the growing nationalist debate concerning education, language, identity, culture and politics of the 1930, painters such as Sudjojono (1914 - 1986), Agus Djaya, Affandi (1907 -1990) and Hendra Gunawan (1918 - 1983) began to challenge the orthodoxy of the Mooi Indie (Beautiful Indies) school. Arguably the social realism they favoured painted in heavy brushstrokes in an expressionist style, 'fitted the conditions of the time' (Supangkat 1993 50).

It was in this context of nation building and political emancipation the earliest university trained artists in Indonesia were instructed in practices with 'Indonesian content'. From the 1950s - 1960s an expressionistic social realist style of painting depicting the life of everyday Indonesians and their struggles was privileged under the auspices of President Sukarno's governance and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI). In this way we can observe the inaugural Indonesian government's championing of painting with cultural and political subject matter by means of the art academies, its commissioning for the influential 'Presidential' collection and support of Partai Komunis Indonesia cultural organisations. By contrast when the second president Suharto came to power in 1965, the social realist painting that was previously endorsed became prohibited. Suharto's supported abstract images that were devoid of figurative or social content.
But at the same time alongside this regional history of modernism and in coexistence with it, Indonesia maintained a long standing tradition of object-based ceremonial, ritual and performance art (Supungkat 2001; Marianto 2001). Indonesian, and more broadly Southeast Asian cultural traditions, can generally be ascribed to the fields of music, dance, theatre, textiles, body adornment and other forms of three-dimensional arts. Like wayang kulit (shadow puppetry), performance and installation art communicated to the Indonesian peoples through its placement and contextualisation of meaningful objects in a given space.

Indonesian audiences seasoned by longstanding cultural traditions not only enjoyed contemporary forms of art but were predisposed to having an interactive experience as well as an expectation of societal expression (Jones 2000). Painting and other 'visual' art forms in Indonesia, although important in the rise of the nationalist struggle were in part circumscribed by notions of exclusivity.

As many Indonesian and several international writers have demonstrated, most notably Supangkat (1993) Wright (1994) and Soemantri (1998), the emergence of contemporary art in Indonesia was understood in a context of, and emerged from, political activism, strong performance and installation traditions which derive from traditional art forms of Southeast Asia. Thus political context and its centrality in visual arts practice (and indeed cultural activism) is a well understood phenomena by visual artists and theorists in Indonesia. In my thesis I draw upon these contrasting and competing artistic and cultural traditions to locate Christanto’s formative years.

**Methodology**
This dissertation adopts an interdisciplinary methodology grounded in extensive readings in history, art history and cultural studies to provide a complex theoretical framework for my arguments. This multidisciplinary approach is intended to challenge existing interpretations as well as opening up new avenues of inquiry. As discussed the framework of this thesis necessarily focuses on the life story of Christanto. In order to address the lack of understanding and knowledge about Dadang Christanto and his formative years it was imperative for me to undertake field work in Indonesia.
Over the course of my research undertaken on a part time basis over four years (2003 - 2008) I have undertaken periods of fieldwork in Indonesia totalling fourteen weeks. I have also conducted a total of twenty taped interviews with Christanto plus numerous informal interviews with the artist and his family, plus informal and formal interviews with Indonesian artists, curators and writers.

The ‘voice’ of Christanto is crucial to this thesis. Extensive interviews with the artist are the means by which I have been able to address the gaps and limitations in the critical response to Christanto. In the transcript of the interviews the insertion of square brackets indicates minor changes in the text. These changes are intended to make the comments, especially those by the artist more accessible and to improve clarity of expression whilst preserving Christanto's actual words. Additionally I have endeavoured where possible to source primary accounts in Indonesia. The thesis provides an opportunity for the most comprehensive sourcing, collating and archiving of both existing visual and written documentation of the artist’s oeuvre to date. At the same time I recognise that there are limitations to the range of sources, Indonesian language publications are difficult to obtain, and texts that are accessible in English are limited.

In a thesis of this nature examining cross cultural interaction it is vital that my thesis take into account cultural and linguistic differences with the potential audiences for this dissertation in Indonesia and Australia. For these reasons I have followed a particular methodology for the nomenclature, order and spelling of names. Artists' names, when first mentioned, will be followed by their birth and death dates in parenthesis. However the order of names may not necessarily follow the western conventions of personal and family name. Throughout the dissertation Chinese and Javanese names will appear in full in the first instance. Chinese names will take various forms and in some cases Chinese names will be written with the family name first followed by the personal name. In other cases Chinese names will follow the common use of generational names as part of a two-character family name. Additionally in Indonesia, Javanese names follow their own distinctive set of conventions. In 1972 a modern spelling system was mandated in Indonesia as many non-Javanese found the old Javanese dialect difficult to pronounce.
In general terms this spelling system, in common use in Indonesia, will be followed except for those individuals where the name follows earlier conventions. Typically Javanese people have three-part names, each part of which is a personal name. Many others have just a single name. Thus the name of curator and writer Hendro Wiyanto will appear as Wiyanto in text and reference whereas the name of artist Sudjojono will appear as a single name only.

The dissertation aims to address the gaps and misunderstanding about Christanto. These are seen to coalesce at three critical junctures: the artist's formative years in Indonesia, the impact of his migration to Australia and the reception in Australia of Christanto's cultural production. To address these issues the structure of this dissertation consists of three thematic sections. Each section begins with a chapter discussing theoretical concerns and the wider historical cultural, social and political context followed by a chapter examining in depth selected artworks from Christanto's body of works from that era.

Part One addresses the gap in knowledge around the artist's formative years in Indonesia. Chapter one will first address Christanto's cultural production within political and cultural events in Indonesia and more specifically in Yogyakarta, Central Java where he mainly resided until 1999. Chapter two specifically examines artworks from the artist's cultural production within the period 1994 to 1998, while Christanto resided in Yogyakarta. The artworks identified here for scrutiny are the key artworks pieces of the period: *Earth man* (performance 1992 - 1996) and *Kekerasan* (Violence, 1995) sculpture. Undertaken by Christanto at the beginning of his art career, these works assisted in establishing the artist's national and international reputation.

Part Two (chapters three and four) investigates the four years following Christanto's migration to Darwin, Australia in 1999. The expansive nature of diasporic theory allows a rich variety of approaches with which to discuss the artist's experience and cultural production of this period (1999 - 2003).
This lively period includes Christanto's participation at the second APT (Brisbane 1999), a lecturing position at the Charles Darwin University (Darwin 1999 - 2003) and numerous exhibitions in Indonesia, Australia and elsewhere. Chapter four will specifically examine the two key works *Red rain* (1999 - 2001) and *Count project* (1999 - 2004). These artworks are presented as evidence to support my argument that the migrant experience increasingly led Christanto to reflect on issues of identity and family history.

Part Three (chapters five and six) examines Dadang Christanto's cultural production within the context of an increasing awareness of display and institutional collection of contemporary Southeast Asian art in Australia. This section focuses in particular on the new museology and the idea of the counter memorial in relation to broader issues of universalism. I argue that the interpretation of Christanto's cultural production continues to be implicated with what I will characterise as a uniquely Australian understanding of Indonesia.

In chapter five I examine the response to Christanto and his art work within a broader historical, political, cultural and social context of Australia. In chapter six, I focus in depth on a single artwork, the performance piece *Litisus: portrait of a family* (2003).

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1. In Australia the art and academic community felt marginalised until this reassessment of the margins occurred see Smith, Terry. (1974) "The provincialism problem". *Artforum*, vol 13, no 1, September.
3. Mc Adams (2006) goes further suggest that the human brain has a natural affinity for narrative construction. That is, people tend to remember facts more accurately if they encounter them in a story. In this view, the individual continually updates their own story and the way in which she / he visualises each scene (or memory) not only shapes how we think about ourselves but how we behave (Mc Adams paraphrased in Carey 2007).
4. Australia's ambivalence towards Asia was historically expressed initially through the White Australia policy of restricted immigration and is evident in the Anglo-centric attitudes of Australian
Prime Ministers such as Robert Menzies (1939 – 41; 1949 - 1966) and more recently Prime Minister John Howard (1996 - 2007).

5 Chaitanya Sambrani (2002 33) in "Austerity - Excess - Invention" discusses the APT and raises some questions concerning the privileging of artworks that are concerned with social and political issues. He states that ‘Dissenting and radical artists especially from Third world economies are increasingly dependent on international curators and first world institutions. Inevitably, such patronage is reliant on a certain apprehension of censorship. The very idea of this art belonging to an endangered species - and is therefore in need of defence by the peoples of ‘the free world’ who can then derive a degree of pride from this defence’. In the literature review and again in Part Three, I have shown that this bias is an important issue, but on the whole it is outside the frame and scope of my thesis.

6 For substantiation of this argument, that is, that there is evidence of ongoing relationship with Southeast Asia prior to the 1990s see Neil Manton (2003).

7 Terry Flew (2002) characterises Keating's views as highly popular with the tertiary-educated middle class but failing to capture the aspirations of rural and outer-suburban voters. According to ALP speech writer Don Watson (Watson quoted in Flew 2002) the agenda exemplified the contradictory qualities that marred Keating’s leadership: a moral imperative and a political death trap.

8 As Chris Mc Auliffe (1994 102) observes, artists such as Christanto, are constrained (there are both opportunities and limitations and individuals make their own choices) however the artists themselves are not necessarily implicated.

9 The massacre was reportedly followed by the arrest of 300 - 400 people, some of whom were allegedly tortured and 60 - 80 of whom were executed on November 15 1991. A commission was set up by the Indonesian Government however, the then Governor of East Timor threatened to resign if the investigation was not objective and Fretilin announced that it would boycott the investigation. The killings in Dili drew international condemnation.

10 The conviction of Australian Schapelle Corby in Bali (2005) on drug charges further fractured diplomatic relations between Indonesia and Australia.

11 The Asian financial crisis of 1997 - 1998 destabilised the support amongst Indonesian military, political and civil society and by the 1990s the New Order administration's authoritarian and increasingly corrupt political and economic practices created domestic unrest. Civil protests were followed by international isolation and combined to force the collapse of the New Order regime and resignation of the presidency in May 1998.

12 This debate can clearly be observed in the formation of the Persagi group see Soemantri, H. (1998) Visual Art, Jakarta, Archipelago Press, p 7.

13 This period had been evocatively captured by renowned Indonesian writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925 - 2006) in Jejak Langkah (Footsteps) 1985. Promedya was a prolific writer of novels, short
stories, essays, and histories of his homeland and its people. Pramoedya at the hands of the Colonial Government, President Sukarno and successor Suharto was imprisoned over many years and in later life detained under house arrest.

14 Artists such as Sudjojono, Gunawan and Affandi feature regularly in the written histories of Indonesian art. Whilst not denying the instrumental role these artists played, Australian / Indonesian researcher Heidi Arbuckle (2000 5) questions their privileged status and the focus on individuals in the historicity of modern Indonesian visual arts. Arbuckle suggests the reason for their status lies both in the traditional focus on the individual through western art history traditions and the fact that these artists were among the few painters who were also prolific writers. Hence their records have served as a reference for subsequent researchers.

15 Discussed further in chapter one, Lekra (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat) was an ostensibly independent cultural organisation ideologically associated with the PKI (Communist Party Indonesia) and the key cultural organisation of the left prior to the events of 1965.

16 Jason Jones (2000) points out that in Southeast Asian societies, where verbal and physical communication often revolves around an issue: quick wit, creative innuendo and analytic skills are social skills held in high esteem.

17 The Northern Territory University was renamed the Charles Darwin University in August 2003 which included a merger at the time with the Centralian College in Alice Springs. Thus at the time of Christanto's lecturing and exhibitions at the University it was under the earlier incarnation, but for ease of reading will be identified as Charles Darwin University throughout the thesis.
PART ONE

Introduction

Part One of this dissertation addresses the lack of contextual knowledge regarding Dadang Christanto's formative years in Indonesia. My assertion is that the artist's lived experiences in Indonesia, coupled with the pervasive historical, cultural and political conditions were decisive factors in shaping his creative output as an artist.

In the first chapter I examine the influence of Christanto’s ethnicity in everyday life in Java and his early art education in Yogyakarta amidst the political and social turmoil of the 1980s. The second chapter comprises a more focussed analysis of selected artworks from Christanto’s early career (from 1994 to 1998) when he was resident in Yogyakarta. The artworks identified for scrutiny in chapter two demonstrate that Christanto's art practice is inextricably linked to the issues of economic, social, cultural and political emancipation.

Thus chapters one and two examine the context of Christanto's youth and its impact on his emerging worldview. The section seeks to provide a creative context for his earliest artworks. In early childhood, Christanto’s worldview was forged principally through tragic family events and the oppression of Chinese Indonesians. At the time of Christanto's childhood in the 1960s and 1970s village and urban communities were engaged with cultural activism addressing social and political concerns. As a child Christanto participated in these activities both in his hometown of Tegal, a rural village in Central Java, and later in the 1980s as a young art student in urban Yogyakarta, sometimes seen as the cultural capital of Java. The cultural activism of this period came to oppose the increasingly authoritarian rule of the New Order (1966 - 1998).

In narrating Christanto's past we begin to encounter notions of individual and collective memory. What were the strategies through which Christanto and others have constructed cultural identity including national, ethnic and gendered identities?
As Ang (2003), Chan (2000) and others have suggested, much of the rhetoric of identity and difference carries implicit assumptions of ontological categories. As we shall see in Part One, identities involve a complex process of imagining, construction and contestation. In general terms Christanto could be said to embrace a 'hybridised' position not as a 'badge of failure or denigration', but as a part of the 'contestational weave of cultures'.¹ Christanto experienced marginalisation in youth as a pervasive experience. From the outset these experiences were informed by a performative element. As I show in Part One the activism permeating Indonesian cultural traditions informed and nuanced Christanto's art practice. My research draws attention to the fact that whereas performance art in a western context emerged as part of an avant-garde protest against the elitism of the art world, in Indonesia performance art also, or in part, grew out of everyday life and the political activism of the era. Focusing on Christanto’s life in Indonesia highlights the cultural differences between Indonesia and Australia. In so doing we begin to understand the reasons why misunderstandings may have occurred in the popular, critical and museological response to the artist and his work.
CHAPTER ONE

To understand the energy and character of Christanto's art we need to understand something of his life story and family background. The key issues for this chapter circulate around ethnic identities, local culture and political activism and the context of Christanto's marginalisation as a Chinese Indonesian.

Christanto was born in 1957 in Tegal, Central Java where his family home remains today and where family members, including his mother, still live. Both Christanto's parents were of Chinese descent. Like many Chinese Indonesians his parents were *toko* (shop) keepers trading in daily consumables - according to Christanto a typical mixed small business or *toko*: outside tubs of kerosene and inside tubs of rice, utensils and cloth (Christanto in interview with Gray, December 2 2006). Christanto’s mother, Tjoe Wie Tiauw, was the primary storekeeper whilst his father, Tan Ek Tjoe, like most of the villagers, grew subsistence crops such as rice and vegetables for the family. Christanto, the second in a family of five children, generally has very happy memories of his childhood. Within an extended family, Christanto’s grandparents lived in close proximity and Christanto’s childhood memories include afternoon naps followed by storytelling in Chinese and Javanese (Streeton 2004 272).

Christanto’s first awareness of art materialised through the batik cloth traded by his mother (Gray 2003 40). Cloth is pivotal to the cultural life of Southeast Asia as part of ritual and everyday life through its symbolic connection to an ancestral spiritual world. According to textile artists Nia Fliam and Agus Ismoyo (Brahma tirta sari), batik serves as a bridge between the seen and unseen dimensions. The batik artist, as creator, is an explorer of energies that are connected to the natural world. As such cloth is passed down from one generation to another as family wealth and is important in intra and international trade with Asia. In Indonesia, batik is particularly important with distinctive regional designs that signify identity. Through trade Javanese wax-resist batik has spread throughout the world and its innovative and creative techniques are much admired. Makers possess skilful and meditative qualities which are essential to the hand-painted batik techniques.
Cloth production in the region is seldom static and new ideas and methods are constantly absorbed and re-interpreted to satisfy changing social and economic circumstances. As we shall see the mark-making evident in Christanto's artwork is directly reminiscent of the skilful and meditative qualities of the hand-painted batik methods.

Christanto's family was quite closely integrated with the local community through the family home, through their toko (shop) trading in batik and also through Christanto’s mother who was active in the local religious community: Tjioe Wie Tiauw followed the Christian faith and was in regular attendance at local congregations. Nevertheless as Chinese Indonesians the Christanto family did not avoid marginalisation. There is considerable variation in the experiences of Chinese Indonesians throughout the Indonesian archipelago. One salient difference - although it can be exaggerated - is that between the urban and rural experience. Whereas in cities such as Jakarta many Chinese Indonesians lived in so-called 'ethnic enclaves', in Tegal, the Christanto family home was not barricaded by high walls from the remainder of the town: the family home had an 'open' Javanese layout which made it part of the village community. As with Javanese homes, visitors could readily enter and exit the Christanto family home from the street.

Despite the fact that the Christanto family were closely integrated with the local community this did not prevent oppression and discrimination. In Indonesia people of Chinese ethnicity have historically experienced a politicised relationship with the local Indigenous population. This marginalisation has its origins in the colonial era. It is typical of the contradictory nature of colonial relationships that Chinese Indonesians were both marginalised and at the same time favored in certain selective contexts. The racial hierarchies implemented during Dutch colonial rule ranged from top to bottom: colonial rulers, 'Eurasians', Chinese and 'natives'. In the process Dutch authorities implemented a classic colonial strategy employed in many other times and places to impose power relations. Such a system made it disadvantageous for ethnic Chinese to assimilate into the Indigenous population setting in place a historical precedence for the marginalisation of Chinese Indonesians. In effect Chinese Indonesians were relegated to an ethnic minority excluded from entry both to the 'Eurasian' elite and integration with an Indigenous population.
In characterising the experience in this way, one needs to be mindful, of the immense variation throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

The complexity of the Chinese experience is evident in recent research. As Charles Coppel (2005 1) points out, Chinese in Indonesia have been doubly marginalised - not only in Chinese diaspora studies but also in Indonesian studies because:

... they are but one ethnic group among hundreds, comprising a mere two or three percent of the total population, but also because they have been constructed as 'foreign' no matter how many centuries they have been settled in the archipelago.²

This position is evident in Christanto's case: despite a high level of social, physical and cultural interaction, this did not prevent feelings of exclusion. Christanto observes

My first language was Javanese, then Indonesian in school. But Indonesians physically recognise me as Chinese because of my hair, my skin colour, my eyes. Physically I am Chinese but mentally I am Javanese (Christanto quoted in Open Letter 2005 6).

Moreover ethnic Chinese in Indonesia were marginalised on the basis of their religious beliefs. While an in-depth study of Chinese religiosity, identity and historicity in Indonesia is beyond the scope of this dissertation, the point to be made here is that Chinese Indonesians are equally as diverse in their ethnic origins and in the timing and circumstances of their migration to Indonesia as they are in religious beliefs. Whilst the majority of Indonesians were Muslim, those of Chinese ethnicity were more commonly Buddhist, Confucian or Christian. Growing up in this milieu Christanto remembers being ridiculed for religious and cultural differences in the practice of circumcision. For example, he recalls his fellow players on the soccer field trying to remove his clothes and taunting him with the words 'Cina lai lai' (Chinese). Perhaps in response to this experience of marginalisation Christanto has forged his own hybrid belief system: a synthesis of the key principles of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism with a Javanese mysticism (Christanto in interview with Gray, November 30 2003). In adulthood Christanto's identity card cites Islam as his religion. However such mis-categorisation was common in Indonesia to satisfy authorities - especially at times of marriage ceremonies (Tapei Times 2007 9).
As Christanto observes (Christanto in interview with Gray, March 23 2007) outside governmental bureaucracy and in everyday life such a compartmentalised approach to religious identity generally held limited significance for individuals like himself.

Nevertheless in the dramatic succession (1965 - 1966) from the inaugural Sukarno Indonesian government to that of President Suharto increasingly discriminatory practices were employed against ethnic Chinese. At its most extreme the racism and oppression of Chinese Indonesians resulted in imprisonments, torture and the disappearance or death of countless people. The question of how many and in what circumstances ethnic Chinese disappeared during this period remains unanswered. As Australian historian Robert Cribb (1990) has pointed out, the circumstances of the killings and disappearances which occurred are very complex and influenced by a myriad of local and national factors, with a great deal of regional variation. Often the sweeping political violence was used as a pretext to exercise existing individual grudges. However there is sufficient evidence to suggest that in many localities ethnic Chinese were especially targeted and made scapegoats. In 1965 under the incoming Suharto's New Order, Chinese Indonesians experienced increasingly prejudicial laws such as forced migration, exclusion from education, the prohibition of public speaking or the use of Chinese languages (including in the publication of Chinese literature). In addition to 'top down' discrimination, Chinese Indonesians also experienced racism and oppression 'from below' and were continuously made scapegoats. Popular sentiment in the early period of Suharto's rule was evident against Chinese Indonesians who were commonly perceived as Communist sympathisers with allegiance to homeland China.

With the tragic disappearance of his father in 1965 (presumably identified as a Communist sympathiser) when Christanto was only eight years of age, the Christanto family felt the full impact and brutality of Suharto’s authoritarian regime. In the years following Tan Ek Tjioe’s 'disappearance', Christanto's mother found it difficult to provide for her five children and Christanto went to live temporarily with his maternal aunt in West Java. It was about this time that Christanto abandoned his Chinese name and adopted the Sundanese name Dadang Christanto.
A requirement by a newly established law, the name change was at the time characterised positively by authorities as advancing integration within the Indonesian community. Though Christanto no longer recalls the precise details of these events he remembers that he was asked to choose a name and at the time he found this exciting. He decided upon 'Dadang' possibly because he liked the popular Sundanese boy's name and because he had a friend with the same name (Christanto in interview with Gray, June 8 2003).

There is irony in the fact that, although Christanto was forced to change his name, this strategic manoeuvre may have enabled him to evade some of the racism and animosity manifested against ethnic Chinese. The opportunity to assume a new identity can be seen in terms of Bhabha’s Third Space. Bhabha (1995) demonstrates that such a 'hybrid' position always involves both loss and gain. On the one hand, assuming a new identity contributed toward Christanto’s self perception of himself as an outsider, separated from both the Chinese community and Indonesia itself. On the other hand, assuming this new identity provided Christanto with new opportunities. Thus Christanto has remarked:

If I try to … reflect about where my place is, I am still [an] outsider, I am [an] outsider. Even when I am in Indonesia, I am [an] outsider. I am not part of [the] Chinese [community]. I am not part of Indonesia (Christanto in interview with Gray, February 18 2005).

Christanto's childhood in Tegal contributed to his feeling of an outsider in Indonesian society. Once embedded as part of his childhood memories, I argue that these feelings of exclusion have remained with Christanto and continued to influence his worldview.

As discussed the idea of 'histories from below' has played a crucial role in the developments of 'subaltern histories' or what are called 'minority histories' (Thompson 1963; Iletto 1979; and Wolf 1982). As a result many writers have challenged official versions of the past and sought to raise more complex and contested minority histories in opposition to earlier monolithic histories of the nation state. In so doing these writers argue for the importance of a more complex notion of history, one that brings forward a plurality of experiences, viewpoints and identities.
An individual's identity is entwined in memory: who you are depends on what you choose to remember. However memories are not only contained in individual recollections, they are also part of the collective memory which involves public representations of 'the past'. In the process of negotiating the contested space between private and public memory, particular narratives and images will be reproduced and reframed. Because minority histories involve life stories and oral history, a great deal of discussion has revolved around the nature of memory and its relationship to history and correspondingly the relationship between 'collective memory' and 'personal memory'. Scholars in memory studies such as Katharine Hodgkin and Susannah Radstone (2006) are principally concerned with interrogating what current preoccupations with the past tell us about the present and what such pre-occupations tell us about how nations use the past to represent themselves. Collective memory is given further currency via modern technologies contributing to 'imagined communities' as posited by Benedict Anderson (1991). Thus nations, ethnic groups, or 'communities' are also assumed to need memories to make coherent identities. Memory studies assume that collective versions of the past will always be 'contested'. As a consequence these contests will question not only what versions of the past are evoked but also who is entitled to speak for that past in the present.

As we shall see Christanto is concerned with addressing both the tragic experience of his childhood and the omission of these events from Indonesian history - specifically the many peoples who 'disappeared' in 1965 and 1966. As Christine Clark (2005 1) points out, Christanto has 'personally experienced how such events take place without leaving footprints on the pages of history, while leaving unimaginable and haunting memories' for those involved. In my analysis of the critical response to Christanto it becomes clear that the omission of these darker events from the official government records of Indonesia has contributed to a lack of knowledge and understanding in the perceptions of the wider Australian community. Nevertheless I would argue that Christanto’s artistic development is not wholly determined by these tragic events. Rather I show that his artistic training, coupled with the dynamic experience of migration enabled Christanto to draw upon these experiences and objectify them in a wider global context.
Cultural activism in Tegal

Christanto’s birthplace in Tegal was auspicious. Tegal, like Yogyakarta, was a very unusual and highly contested site through its geography, history and importance in cross cultural exchange. On the one hand the Javanese north coast where Tegal is located - sometimes called pesisir or coast, meaning 'edge' or 'fringe' - has for centuries sustained contact with many cultures. Historically merchants from Makassar and elsewhere would settle in the region for months at a time awaiting the returning ‘trade-winds’. More recently Tegal's identity has been informed by its location on the 'trans-Java' highway between Jakarta and Semarang. Alongside Tegal’s longstanding pesisir or 'periphery' status are the competing notions of cultural identity forged by its immediate surrounds with the 'high' central Javanese court cultures of Yogyakarta and Solo, as well Cirebonese and Sundanese cultures. Thus the perceived continuity and uniqueness of Tegal and its social and cultural relations is evident in a strong regional identity (Curtis 1997 251). Tegal was also a particular focus for the political activism occurring throughout Java during this era. This can be attributed to members of Tegal's contemporary urban progressive intelligentsia. They claim that the 'unique' social dynamics of the Tegal region have produced an assertive, egalitarian 'grassroots' ethos that provides an antithesis to the overbearing local and centralised authorities operating throughout Indonesia (Curtis 1997 249).

Tegal’s particular character impacted on Christanto. Prior to his father’s disappearance, Christanto witnessed a growing level of cultural activism with a political agenda. Christanto recalls:

During the 1960s, I remember that there was a lot of activity in our village. We always went out into the streets to jump around when we heard the sound of the drum band from the Ansor youth or Muhammadiyah youth groups. They would gather in the empty field in front of our house during the carnivals. Also whenever there was an art evening by the people's youth or Lekra they too used the field for their events (Christanto quoted in Wiyanto 2003 49).

The ideological underpinnings of the three groups identified in Christanto's comment reflect the wider cultural / political participation of Indonesian villages at this time.
Ansor was and is a Muslim youth organisation affiliated with the Nahdatul Ulama, an organisation of moderate Islamic scholars. Muhammadiyah is an organisation, literally meaning 'followers of Muhammad' whose members were and are active in social and educational activities. The third group identified by Christanto is Lekra (Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat) a nominally independent cultural organisation ideologically associated with the PKI (Communist Party Indonesia) and the key cultural organisation of the left prior to the events of 1965. While all these groups had strategies of cultural activism and shared villager participants, in concrete terms their ideologies were diametrically opposed. This is most obvious in the actuality that a number of Ansor groups are known to have undertaken the killings of the suspected PKI sympathisers in the 1965 and 1966 period. All three groups were nevertheless involved in cultural activism at various times and in various locations and they formed part of the cultural life in village Indonesia.

Crucially Christanto experienced the activities of Ansor, Muhammadiyah and Lekra as part of daily life. As considered earlier, Christanto grew up as an outsider, experiencing racism and profound personal tragedy but at the same time he experienced an environment where culture, at the level of village life, provided a means and outlet for political and cultural expression. The influence of this cultural activism is a crucial determining factor in the development of Christanto's ideology and philosophy as an artist. He says:

History has always celebrated the loftiness and heroism of its leaders and their war generals. However history's other participants (rarely mentioned in the historical record) include private citizens, or common people, who were forced to become involved in an historical process which they may not have supported. Today's era of which I am an observer, people call the age of "development". We can see the numerous "monuments" intended to commemorate its success. Can it be said that its development is linear in the same way as is the historical record of the ruling elite? Has it not resulted in making victims of the common people? (Christanto 1999).

Through the personal, cultural and political experiences of his youth, Christanto gained an insight into the difference between official histories which memorialise those in power and the more complex and contested histories written 'from below'.

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Yogyakarta beginnings

In 1975 Christanto, with the encouragement of his mother and siblings, moved to Yogyakarta. Christanto's experiences in Yogyakarta mark a critical juncture between his earlier traumatic experiences of fear and ostracisation in the village of Tegal and his subsequent development as professional artist. This period of Christanto's development during the years 1975 - 1999 in Yogyakarta raises many questions. What were the new circumstances in Yogyakarta under which his cultural identity and ideology could flourish? What was the nature of his political, cultural and educational experiences and how did these influences contribute toward his artistic development?

Yogyakarta in central Java is commonly celebrated as Indonesia's cultural centre. This position stems from the region's historical importance as a site of successive agrarian kingdoms and as a center of classical Javanese art and culture such as batik, dance, theatre, music, storytelling and poetry. In addition Yogyakarta can be considered a historical centre for the Indigenous intellectual elite who gathered there as a site of rebellion, first against Dutch colonial rule and second in independent Indonesia after the Second World War when Dutch forces reoccupied Jakarta. Since the inception of Suharto's New Order, Yogyakarta has always maintained a degree of autonomy from national authoritarian governance through the auspices of the progressive Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX (1912 - 1988). As such Yogyakarta is the only region to maintain Sultan authority until contemporary times. For these reasons many young men and women from different social and cultural backgrounds have chosen to study in the city. Thus Yogyakarta has become renowned as a centre for excellence in tertiary education and continues to attract students from across the Indonesian archipelago creating what Indonesian art historian Dwi Marianto coins a 'multicultural condition' (Marianto quoted in Wahyuni 2002). From the 1950s onwards, this concentration of students and academics provided the intellectual backdrop for a dynamic popular youth culture.

Christanto first attended the respected SMSR (High School for the Arts) from 1975 - 1979. This was followed by a very intense period involved with the Sanggar Teater Bengkel (Bengkel Theatre Workshop).
In 1980 Christanto resided in the Wirobrajan district of Yogyakarta from where he could hear the Sanggar Teater Bengkel in rehearsal. Christanto recalls his fascination with the dynamic life of the theatre community and its flamboyant members led by the charismatic figure, writer W. S. Rendra (Marianto 2001 162). Another speaker at Sanggar Teater Bengkel was the influential student activist Hariman Siregar (Marianto 2001 162). For Christanto this period was a heady time of reading and listening: amongst the passionate readings at the Sanggar Teater Bengkel were the writings of Frederico Garcia Lorca, Berthold Brecht, Mahatma Gandhi and Krishna Murti - an ecumenical breadth of radical writers reflective of an Indonesian community engaged and connected to international movements (Stretton 2004 272). Crucially at the Sanggar Teater Bengkel Christanto mastered performance techniques that would later feature in his art performances (Wiyanto 2003 48). Testimony to the skilful performance artist that Christanto was to become is exemplified in Earth man (1992 - 1996) which is discussed in chapter two. Movement, voice and body techniques deriving from the performance traditions of Indonesia were taught as the skills and knowledge required for theatre and street performances for cultural practice as part of everyday life. In 1981 Christanto began his instruction in the Painting Department, at Institut Seni Indonesia (Indonesian Institute of Art). Among his fellow students were Heri Dono (b1960) and Eddie Hara (b1957). Few students at this time were Chinese, or were particularly identified as Chinese Indonesians which may suggest that ethnic minorities found greater acceptance in the ambience of a tertiary art institution. Christanto did not initially have a clear vision of his artistic orientation or his future career:

   It was a time when selling works of art was not easy, prior to the recent interest of collectors from both Indonesia and abroad. Achieving economic security through painting was not easy… Christanto's mother would frequently ask him what he thought he could do in the future with his works of art, a fair question [considering] the hardship involved in financing her son's schooling and living away from home. He was unable, however, to provide a convincing answer (Marianto 2001 163).

As we shall see Christanto came to develop in other ways, not by working as a painter, but through performance and installation art. Growing disenchantment with the New Order governance had already begun to surface by the time Christanto arrived at the Institute in 1981.
Against a backdrop of student protests in many campuses and wide ranging criticism of the New Order, a new wave of artists and students emerged who sought to express their dissatisfaction with what they saw as a prevailing conservatism in modern Indonesian art (Miklouho-Maklai 1991).15 As discussed, the politicisation of art practice (and indeed cultural activism) is a well understood phenomena in Indonesia. Its influence is acknowledged by visual artists, theorists, cultural commentators and the broader public. In the context of nation building and political emancipation, the earliest university-trained artists in Indonesia endorsed and were instructed in practices that engaged with 'Indonesian content'. During the 1950s - 1960s an expressionistic social realist style of painting depicting everyday lives of individuals and their personal struggle was given privileged status under the auspices of President Sukarno's governance and the Partai Komunis Indonesia (Indonesian Communist Party, PKI). Subsequently when President Suharto assumed presidency in 1965 the social realist painting that was previously endorsed was then prohibited. Thereafter the New Order government privileged a de-politicised style of international abstraction. Several years of increasingly authoritarian governance under President Suharto's New Order created the impetus for a radical movement of younger artists who protested against the conservatism of the art faculties and the de-politicisation of art generally. As a student at the Institut Seni Indonesia Christanto participated in the ideological debates and art student activism of this period. Opposition to the prevailing conservatism mobilised the formation of Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru in 1974 with which Christanto later became involved.

When Christanto graduated in 1986 he initially found employment at Pusat Kateketik. The critical capacity Christanto gained with Puskat built on and extended insights he had achieved previously from participating in W. S. Rendra's Sanggar Teater Bengkel community (Marianto 2001 163). A Jesuit institution, Pusat Kateketik sought to create an interfaith dialogue between students and nearby villagers of both Islamic and Christian faiths.

Pusat Kateketik was established by Romo (Father) Mangunwijaya who later became an influential figure for Christanto.
At Puskat, the philosophical underpinnings of the inter-faith dialogue enabled Christanto to mingle with a radical mix of priests, lecturers, artists, students and villagers. It was from this eclectic group that Christanto learned and internalised a critical approach to social, cultural, economic and political issues (Marianto 2001 163). Father Ruedi Hoffman, a Swiss Catholic priest responsible for social communication affairs at Puskat, helped shape Christanto’s thinking at this time. Hoffman’s philosophy provided a sharp critical analysis of contemporary social phenomena, including new ways of conceptualising ideologies and their practical implementation. Puskat was also a training institution which provided students with a unique environment - in effect a tangible 'living experiment'. Pusat Kateketik offered training in professional audio and visual production with graduates often gaining employment in television, radio and the communication industries. Christanto tutored on the production of low-cost media in the form of theatre and comic strips. It was during his time at Puskat that Christanto created several comic books on biblical themes including The loaves and the fishes, A day's suffering is enough for a day and Lazarus appeals (Wiyanto 2003 49). These activities were to prove a formative experience in Christanto’s own art practice because they provided him with an ideological philosophy as well as the practical skills for creative work using inexpensive materials (Marianto 2001 163).

The influential priest Romo Mangunwijaya who passed away in 1999, remains a popular figure in Indonesia. Best known for his humanitarian work, Romo Mangunwijaya dedicated his life to serving marginalised communities mainly in Yogyakarta. During the New Order rule of the 1980s and 1990s, Romo Mangunwijaya championed the rights of the poor people living in 'slum' conditions especially at Kampung Code (1981 -1986) a makeshift village on the banks of the Code river in Yogyakarta and Kedung Ombo (1989) in Boyolali, Central Java. Here the military forced a resettlement of households for the World Bank development of the Kedung Ombo dam project. Romo Mangunwijaya felt that his most important role was as a teacher. He believed in the right of poor people to have access to education and he supported the educational philosophy that learning should be student-centered and inquiry-based. Romo Mangunwijaya believed that the right kind of education would bring not only freedom to the poor but to Indonesia as a nation (Khudori 2001).
Correspondences exist between the early life experiences of Romo Mangunwijaya and Dadang Christanto: through their shared historical and political experiences a common philosophy is evident. As a child, Mangunwijaya experienced the social and economic tensions of the war against Dutch colonial rule and likewise Christanto experienced the societal and political unrest of the 1960s. Both witnessed that the real sacrifices were made by poor farmers and peasants. However Mangunwijaya being of Dutch-Indonesia parentage, was a minority outsider like Christanto, who was targeted during 'people sweepings' of the colonial war. By the early 1990s the two men's paths had crossed: while Christanto was based in Yogyakarta, Mangunwijaya was, at the same time, establishing his innovative school *Yayasan Edukasi Dasar* (Basic Education Foundation) on the outskirts of the city. Christanto, like Mangunwijaya, was involved in many community art activities including activities in his home town of Tegal, which focused on youth education. Christanto was also involved in Yogyakarta's cultural activism of this time and as an example, in 1992 he co-organised the *Experimental Art Festival* involving approximately a hundred young artists (Supungkat 1993:12).

Romo Mangunwijaya, through his campaign in support of the villagers at Kedung Ombo, was an important catalyst for the *Kekerasan* series (discussed in detail in chapter two). *Who will be sacrificed? Kedung Ombo* (1991) is a series of four canvases concerned with the victims of the World Bank project whose land was to be flooded for a proposed dam. At the time the case received significant media coverage in Indonesia and the resulting controversy generated discussion around the question of who benefits from such development. Certainly art historian Brita Miklouho-Makalai (1991:2) saw Christanto's work as 'a tribute to the silent endurance of the “little people” who, although politically weak, have a strong and angry spirit'.


A professional artist
Christanto first emerged on the contemporary art scene in Indonesia in 1986 with his participation in an event organised by Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru (New Art Movement) (1975 - 1979). Jim Supangkat, one of its founding members, affirms that Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru was formed as a challenge to the de-politicisation of art that had occurred from the late 1960s onwards (Turner 2005 203). Suharto's New Order prohibited the depiction of the abysmal social conditions of the common Indonesian people. At the same time the government funded national art academies that espoused a 'modernist' abstraction distanced from any political commentary. In response members of Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru initiated protest marches and exhibitions in Bandung, Yogyakarta and Jakarta. The group's members typically worked in installation, ready-mades, assemblage, performance and they employed photographic realism to make political comments on specific contemporary events. Installations were already included at the first exhibition in 1975 - although Supangkat (2001 13) points out that the term ‘installation’ was not yet used. Although the actual quantity of artworks was relatively nominal, the group's legacy has far outweighed the actual production of art, through the challenge it provided to a prevailing conservatism (Supangkat 1998 100).

In some regards the employment of installation by Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru members denotes a point of departure in the history of contemporary Indonesian art. Installation had the capacity to transcend the exclusivity of the art object in an Indonesian context. For many, installations provided a more tangible experience for the artist and the audience capable of recreating all the drama and emotion of traditional Indonesian art practices in theatre and dance thereby bringing them into the contemporary world of politics and trauma. Yet by its very ephemeral nature and limited monetary value, installation bypassed the Indonesian art market (Kusumastuti 2006). According to Wright (1994 14), in the 1980s a critical juncture occurred in the development of contemporary Indonesian art with the death of several key individuals with direct links to the independence struggle of the 1930s and 1940s: Hendra Gunawan, Sudjojono and Ahmad Sadari.
It was in this context that, in 1987, almost a decade following its formation, several members revived the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru in order to facilitate the Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi (Fantasy World Department Store) exhibition. Many artists participated including Christanto although not all were members of the movement. The exhibition was held at the iconic Ismail Marzuki Art Centre (TIM) which was associated with a series of influential experimental art exhibitions in the 1970s, under the directorship of acclaimed writer and cultural critic Dr Umar Khayam (Supangkat 1998 104). In the context of the 1980s the question of an Indonesian identity and modernity were again revived by Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru. Such theoretical debates were given further currency through the concurrent trajectories of international movements. These included liberation theory emerging from the Philippines and South America, and from an alternate direction, French poststructuralist thought through the writings of Michel Foucault (Supangkat 2001 13).\textsuperscript{21} The issues of 'context' as referred to by Foucault, lead to an examination of the specific content or localness of the exhibition and its interaction with broader socio-cultural conditions.

It may have been apparent to Christanto at this time of his capacity in adulthood to intermingle and gain respect from peers in the wider Javanese community. So too, an awareness may have been developing of the agency of Chinese Indonesian peers. Ariel Heryianto, Arief Budiman, George Ade Condro and Halim HD who, in an academic arena and in their cultural criticism of marginalised experiences empathised with the plight of the poor and often exalted social consciousness in their academic writings.

The Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi exhibition involved an intentionally eclectic group of film-makers, photographers, critics, sociologists, graphic designers, fashion designers and interior designers.\textsuperscript{22} The universal abstraction advocated by the authoritarian regime conveniently stood in for a de-politicised art form. In protest the 1987 exhibition aimed to contest this 'universalist stance' by incorporating so-called 'low art' or popular art. In line with the original manifesto of Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Supangkat (2001 13) argues that Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi made overt the subtleties of the connection between anti-universalism and Indonesian popular culture.
In the exhibition *Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi* the installation contributed by Christanto, as one of the invited participants, was entitled *Balada Sukardal* (Ballad of Sukardal) (1986) (Plate1). The piece immediately brought Christanto to the attention of the critics and marked the beginning of his career as a professional artist (Supangkat 1993). *Balada Sukardal* was produced from the frame of an Indonesian pedicab painted white. The ubiquitous pedicab or *becak*, as it is known in Indonesia, is a bicycle which has been converted by adding two wheels and a passenger-carrying seat in front. Powered by a human driver, the becak carries passengers and goods from one place to another for a fee and it is a convenient, cheap form of everyday transport for ordinary people. In the exhibition the pedicab hung upside down from a rope attached to the ceiling. Below on the floor a tipped over stool, also painted white, hinted at violence. A white cotton cloth of a type that is used by Javanese to wrap corpses, hung as both a backdrop and a runner. From the pedicab hung a white death mask, like that used in Indonesian theatre.

One and all implicitly understood that the work was intended as a memorial to Sukardal, a pedicab driver from Bandung, whose story had recently featured in the national media. Not long after Sukardal had paid for his pedicab in instalments, it was confiscated in an operation carried out by the local authorities to eradicate pedicabs from Bandung in a process of modernisation. Sukardal committed suicide by hanging himself as he saw no hope of other employment (Wright 1994 209). Indonesian art historian Dwi Marianto (2001 161) later hailed this extraordinary artwork as a 'historical landmark in the development of contemporary art' - an evocative voice in protest against contemporary social and political issues.

**Conclusion**
This account of Christanto's youth has revealed that his experiences in Yogyakarta mark a juncture with his earlier traumatic experiences in the village of Tegal. Christanto’s participation *Pusat Kateketik* and *Sanggar Teater Bengkel* in Yogyakarta forged a link with his formative experiences. Both community art organisations were concerned with the pace of industrialisation that demanded sacrifices from agrarian or common people, the majority of whom were very poor. Such sacrifices had been witnessed and experienced by Christanto himself in the village of Tegal.
Community and student activism in Yogyakarta provided an ideological context where Christanto was able to sharpen and internalise a critical approach to social, cultural, economic and political issues. Thus Christanto came to develop not as a painter but rather as a performance and installation artist. Through *Pusat Kateketik* Christanto developed techniques in the creative use of low cost mediums and at *Sanggar Teater Bengkel* he learnt traditional body and performance techniques. In the context of *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru*, installation and performance thus provided a more tangible experience capable of communicating to a wider audience. Here Christanto arrived at his first major installation and recognition as a visual artist.

I turn now to an in depth discussion of two key artworks. In chapter two I focus on a critical analysis of select works from Dadang Christanto’s early oeuvre within the period 1994 -1996. Undertaken by Christanto at the beginning of his art career, the installation and performance art considered in chapter two contribute, as we shall see, towards the establishment of his national and international reputation.
Plate 1
Dadang Christanto

*Ballada Sukardal / Ballad of Sukardal* 1986

Installation
Dimensions variable
Collection of the artist
Photographer F X Harsono
Plate 2
Dadang Christanto

*Kerkerasan I / Violence I* 1995

Earthenware

Dimensions variable

Collection of the artist

Photographer unknown
Plate 3

Dadang Christanto

*Kerkerasan I / Violence I* (detail) 1995

Earthenware

Dimensions variable

Collection of the artist

Photographer unknown
Plate 4

Dadang Christanto

*Earth man* 1992 - 1996

Fukuoka, Jakarta, Surabaya and Solo

Photographer unknown
Plate 5

Dadang Christanto

Earth man (detail) 1992 - 1996

Fukuoka, Jakarta, Surabaya and Solo

Photographer unknown
CHAPTER TWO

Introduction

The artworks identified here for close scrutiny are two major pieces from Christanto’s early artistic career: the performance Earth man (1992 - 1996) (see Plates 2 and 3) and the sculpture series Kekerasan (1995) (see Plates 4 and 5). These two artworks, focused on issues of economic, social, cultural and political marginalisation, are examined in relation to the formative experiences of Christanto's youth and his artistic training in Yogyakarta and the critical response it generated. In focusing on these early artworks we begin to observe the contrasts between Indonesian and international responses to Christanto’s oeuvre.

As discussed in chapter one, the period of Christanto’s childhood and early adulthood coincided with transformative political and cultural events in Indonesia culminating in the demise of the New Order governance in October 1998. What connections can be drawn between these sweeping political and cultural events and the artist's work of this period? What was the impact of Christanto’s marginalisation as a Chinese Indonesian and the personal tragedy experienced by his family (associated with the disappearance of his father in 1965) and the formative influence of his hometown of Tegal? At this time, how were these personal experiences synthesised by Christanto in relation to broader political issues concerning recognition for the plight of minority groups and their historical experiences?

Christanto, like other Indonesian performance artists such as FX Harsono (b1949), Moelyono (b1957), Heri Dono and Arahmaiani (b1961) commonly engages with Indonesian traditions of performing arts. A great deal of this living tradition such as wayang kulit (shadow puppet) and tayuban (folk dance) are performed on the street and associated with the orang kecil ('small' or poor person).
This overarching theme is implicit in Christanto's socio-political viewpoint and empathy with the rural poor. Like all traditions, Javanese performance traditions are dynamic and in constant flux. Typically part of festivities, celebrations and everyday events they often involve the audience in some way. For example, the wayang kulit is a popular shadow puppetry which has for centuries narrated instructive tales of moral behavior and values. As art historian Anne Richter points out, the wayang kulit continues to act as an important medium of social and cultural integrity in Indonesia (Richter 1993:12). Wiyanto (2004:29) in a monograph on the artist Heri Dono goes further to suggest that '[during] the New Order era, wayang became one among [many] means of propaganda [by] the ruling power . . . [because it was considered] necessarily black and white in perspective’. The ruling elite however never had a total monopoly on the meanings and symbolism in these art forms, which were often reinterpreted and subverted in popular traditions. Contemporary artists like Heri Dono in his exploration of the wayang puppets, used familiar wayang narratives to comment on the excesses of the ruling elite and their corrupt practices.

Contemporary Indonesian performance artists wanted their work to be socially and politically relevant. Performance art could not be sold. That was its point of protest and it was perceived to have the potential to attract and engage audiences readily. Like installations, performance operated in real space and as such it could incorporate local narrative and storytelling traditions, forms of physical movement, vocal, verbal or other sounds and was better reflective of the multi-media format of traditional Javanese storytelling. As we saw in chapter one Christanto's piece Balada Sukardal (1986) was widely understood as a memorial to Sukardal, a pedicab driver from Bandung: using the medium of installation, it evocatively gave voice to contemporary social and political issues. The deployment of these object-based traditions by Christanto is clearly evident in his early works considered in this chapter. For Christanto, his earliest experiences of performance occur in relation to the festivals and youth theatre of Tegal and his childhood experiences were advanced through his training in performance techniques and philosophy in Yogyakarta at Sanggar Teater Bengkel.
In addition to these Indonesian performance traditions contemporary artists from the 1980s onwards such as Christanto, Arahmaiani, FX Harsono, Moelyono and Heri Dono engaged with the conceptual and philosophical underpinnings of avant garde 'happenings' or performance art from Germany, the United States, Japan and elsewhere. Unlike Indonesia, performance art in the west emerged from a radical avant garde which took many forms. All questioned the limitations of the art object framed within academic traditions and its commoditisation and institutionalisation. Nevertheless there were distinctions: ‘happenings’ of the type which originated in the United States could take place anywhere, they were generally inter-disciplinary, they were not driven by a narrative and frequently sought to involve the audience. However others, for example the Fluxus movement, led by German artists such as Joseph Beuys (whom Christanto cites as an influence) were radically political and groundbreaking (Christanto in interview with Gray, December 2 2006). In contrast with this western tradition of performance, Dutch Indonesian artist Mella Jaarsma characterises Indonesian performance art as 'an artistic medium that emerged from… within the way artists see the social and political situation around them' (Jaarsma quoted in Wijono 2002 20). That is, a synthesis of Indigenous cultural traditions and a global present.

As we shall see in Part Three, the art world’s experience of performance art and installation primed the perception of audiences here and overseas for the arrival of Dadang Christanto and contributed to the immediate positive response he received. In some regards we can see here that the ‘institutional rush' of interest in contemporary Southeast Asian art - especially in the forms of performance and installation - reflected a coincidence of interests. Nevertheless there are important distinctions to be drawn between the performance traditions of Indonesia and the west. In Europe, United States and Australia, performance art emerged as a protest against the elitism of the art world yet remained part of the avant-garde whereas in Indonesia, performance existed as part of an ongoing cultural tradition, loved, respected and well understood at all levels of society as part of festivals, ceremonies and everyday life.
Moreover contemporary performance artists in Indonesia could be sure that audiences implicitly understood the participatory character of performance and it was assumed that audiences would readily engage in dialogue with the performers.

As discussed in chapter one, *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* was a major focus of performances and actions in Indonesia in the late seventies and early eighties. This group of artists were intent on denouncing conservative art academies as well as destructive governmental practices. In particular artists such Dadang Christanto, Arahmaiani, FX Harsono and Moelyono were concerned to address the impact of rapid industrialisation in the early 1980s. As Christanto demonstrated in *Balada Sukardal*, dubious governmental practices increasingly demanded sacrifices from agrarian or orang kecil. Contemporary performance artist Iwan Wijono (b1971) observes that:

> Most of the events involved further [...] uses of various elements of traditional street performance [...] It soon became standard practice among newer groups to paint [the] entire body with symbolic colours, mud or other material. Each material is a direct [allusion] either to political parties, cultural understandings, or current events [...] as a means of protesting the government's decision[s] (Wijono 2002 20).

In Indonesian performance, as with installation, the materials employed are therefore directly linked to expression of a political ethos inclusive of the broader community. Thus an employment of 'low' everyday technology and traditional forms such as *wayang kulit* can be observed in the artworks of Christanto and other young artists of the period. In particular Christanto’s performance and installations are characterised by his deliberate use of materials derived from the earth. From the very outset of his career Christanto uses natural materials such as clay slip and terracotta with a great sensitivity, retrieving a sense of dignity for over exploited materials. Within a national context of rapid urbanisation, natural resources and particularly land ownership were characterised by the ruthless exploitation by a privileged few within the Indonesian business class and ruling urban elite.

Art materials, have in themselves, long been understood as a carrier of meaning.
In the context of Indonesia, this is particularly the case where materials such as paint and canvas are known to convey a historical privilege associated with colonial traditions and the subsequent ruling elite and middle class. At the time of the development of the Kekerasan series in 1995, only a small number of artists were using everyday items available in an urban environment. Marianto (1996) and Wright (1996) have emphasised that the use of terracotta clay as a material for contemporary visual art in Indonesia at the time was unique to Christanto. Contemporary Indonesian ceramicists were generally using more refined clays in high fired and glazed kiln ware. These studio ceramicists' activities were operating primarily within the context of an academic reception most evident in the respected ceramics department of the Institut Teknologi Bandung (Bandung Institute of Technology).

By contrast Christanto and his contemporaries including Heri Dono, Nindityo Adipurnomo (b1961) and Ninis Anusapati (b1957) were drawing upon longstanding cultural traditions of everyday society. As mentioned, Heri Dono explored the wayung kulit using it to great affect to satire the then ruling New Order. Javanese hair styles have been explored by the artist Nindityo for over a decade, particularly the iconic konde. Sculptor Anusapasti is best known for his works created from scrap wood or found objects made of ordinary wood types and based on traditional Javanese objects such as rice pounders and simple musical instruments. His interest in traditional forms is not a nostalgic longing for the past. Anusapati explains his intent is to resist rampant consumerism and increasing product standardisation (Anusapati quoted in Wiyanto 2001 8). These artists' commonality was their individual experiences of cultural traditions of everyday society in Java and its reconceptualised manifestation in their artistic work.

Christanto's symbolic viewpoint concerning soil was directly associated with experience of Romo Mangunwijaya. Both men placed importance upon the cultural and spiritual significance of soil and water. Some critics have emphasised a more pessimistic view. Wiyanto for example, maintains that the cultural and spiritual significance of these elements is fading under the impact of rapid modernisation - a process 'focussed on commodifying [sic] anything and everything and rendering it meaningless' (Wiyanto 2003 46).
Christanto, in using terracotta clay, is drawing on the familiarity with its well known use by potters in Nitiprayan Bantul village in southwest Yogyakarta. Nitiprayan Bantul is a district with a rural village atmosphere devoted primarily to rice fields and historically well known as a potters’ community and a community focused on activism, theatre and music. In addition the district had a small 'cottage' industry of brick making in which the 'low cost materials I [Christanto] utilised, were easy to find and use' (Christanto in interview with Gray December 2 2006).


Performances of *Earth man* have been staged in Japan at Fukuoka, (1992) and in Indonesia at Solo (1994), Surabaya (1995) and Jakarta (1996). In this performance Christanto begins by ardently painting his naked body with wet terracotta clay. The simple cloth he wears is to cover the groin. His actions are slow and deliberate and undertaken in complete silence. Finally, after some time, Christanto's entire body is covered in clay and there is no other adornment on the body. The audience is witness to the transformation. Through the clay, Christanto's identity is rendered unrecognisable. As Wright (1998 45) has observed:

> Dadang's face is transformed into a white mask. The reddish stare of inhuman eyes glares at a point somewhere beyond us. The artist as we had known him is no longer there. Before us now is a creature completely unknown.

Wright’s commentary highlights the process of transformation which occurs in the performance. Additionally I would argue that it is important to acknowledge that the symbolism of the clay is crucial to this of transformative process - a tangible and visceral reference to the soil and the land of agrarian people. Christanto's use of a wet clay mix is, as Wijono (2002 21) observes, 'a cheap material not considered appropriate for 'fine art' and associated with poor brick makers who supply the rich for the materials to build their houses in the cities'. Thus in painting the human body, the performance signals the transformation of the artist back into a pre-modern identity and alludes poignantly to the plight of the *orang kecil* in contemporary Indonesia.

It is well understood that all installations and performances will vary slightly depending on the context in which they are viewed.
Thus in each performance of *Earth man*, the meaning and significance of the work varies slightly depending on the context and setting in which it takes place. The resonance of the *Earth man* piece was contingent on the environment in which it was performed.

Typically Christanto chose public venues such as shopping centres or other urban environments such that his performances created a striking dichotomy between the 'primitive' figure and his ‘modern’ environment. Throughout the performance the figure moved slowly and with dignity, seemingly alert to the modern surroundings with which he was evidently unfamiliar. A figure of alienation, the agrarian man / and urban worker - both *orang kecil* - moved in and out of shopping malls, walked through the streets, unobtrusive and unannounced gathering a crowd of interested passers-by who chose whether or not to follow the curious figure.

Most particularly Christanto recalls the events surrounding one particular encounter in the performance of *Earth man* in 1995, at the Surabaya shopping centre in Indonesia (Christanto in interview with Gray, February 2 2003). Having tried to gain entry to the shopping centre earlier in the day, Christanto was denied entry by security personnel who saw him as ‘dirty’ because his body was painted in terracotta clay. Christanto's solution was to go into the shopping centre taking the clay with him and make use of the rest room facilities to paint his body. He then walked through the shopping centre and out onto the street. Christanto's initial intention was to walk through the streets and join a nearby art forum. However as he walked Christanto realised that the forum was further away than he had at first thought and he realised that he would arrive too late. In response to these difficulties Christanto modified his original plan and flagged a taxi. By engaging the taxi driver in thoughtful conversation during the course of the journey, the taxi driver effectively became involved in the performance. Would this happen in Australia? I doubt it. The incident implies a degree of empathy on the part of the taxi driver. Could we observe that, because performance art is part of everyday life in Indonesia, it works to bridge the gap between rural and urban experiences - imperative in a world with increasing migration of the rural poor into the cities?
Contemporary Indonesian performance art of this period typically explored various everyday spaces as a 'stage': in streets, in markets and in shopping malls where the artist / performer integrated with their audience / participants. The space of the everyday is crucial to Christanto’s embodied philosophy:

The audience is of course a consideration in - and cannot be seen as being separate from - the creative process in my works. Such considerations become apparent through the audience reaction, the atmosphere, the effect, the hope. Which of these aspects will the audience consider when they come face to face with my work? (Christanto quoted in Christine Clark 1999 200).

Thus Christanto is particularly concerned with agency. The centrality of the audience is crucial to Christanto’s philosophy of performance. In Kekerasan we will see the power relationship between the viewer and the artwork is important. In Part Three I will investigate further audience engagement in the context of the 1993 performance work For those who have been killed. Dadang Christanto has commented on the positioning of his artwork in relation to the audience and its methodological underpinnings. Christanto does not see the artwork displayed in a gallery with an audience, nor as a theatrical performance with the actors separated from the paying audience by the proscenium arch. Rather as Viktor Turner (1987) argues, we have artists / performers and audience / participants. This creative space becomes a meeting point with the potential for social change. Christanto says:

In addition [the idea of the] audience [as a] noun is not passive; it is a noun that is active. The audience is not an object but a subject. Because of its position as a subject, a dialogue occurs between the audience and my art (Christanto quoted in Christine Clark 1999 200).

In this way we can observe Christanto's methodology corresponds with relational aesthetics as articulated by French theorist Nicolas Bourriaud (2002) in which the audience is envisaged as a community. Rather than the artwork being an encounter between a viewer and an object, relational art produces inter-subjective encounters. According to Bourriaud, in these encounters, meaning is elaborated collectively, rather than in the space of the individual.

In traditional and contemporary Indonesian performance, the actors share the space of the audience who also become participants either intentionally or unintentionally.
The passer-by becomes an active participant and in so doing actively democratises the artwork. As discussed in chapter one, as a result of his early political social and cultural experiences where he witnessed the propensity for everyday people to be consigned to 'history's other participants' (Christanto 1993), Christanto is particularly concerned with retrieving historical agency.

A synthesis is evident here in determining Christanto's methodology as an artist and in contemporary debates on representation and the politics of cultural identity in which ‘speaking for the other’ is seen to potentially incorporate unequal power relationships. But these debates are more complex than at first appears. In response Christanto differentiates between the 'explorative' or 'exploitive' (Christanto in interview with Gray December 2 2006). For example in these early performance works Christanto specifically references the orang kecil of Indonesia - incorporated within ongoing relationships of oppression and exploitation - but I will also argue that he is also concerned with broader universal issues of justice and human rights. Through his audience Christanto seeks to speak to everyman, universal and ongoing. As Wright (1995 10) observes 'it is clear that the artist is not solely interested in having his own individual voice heard'. Christanto in speaking on concerns of the poor and marginalised is looking to 'explore' universal issues, a problematic position, heightened in the context of generations of Indonesian artists speaking on behalf of the orang kecil.

**Kekerasan I (1995)**

*Kekerasan* translates literally as violence. The title of this series is suggestive of Christanto's emphasis that violence is not only a physical act but is more pervasive and occurs wherever power or pressure results in poverty, injustice and dependence (Supangkat 1993 12). In this way we can observe Christanto's alliance with the assertions of French theorist Michel Foucault, who was personally active in campaigns for prisoners' rights in France, and read by Christanto in Indonesia. Foucault observes the historical breaks and discontinuities that result in disciplines and categories being accepted as naturalised principles. That is, discourse, practices and objects are created (or naturalised) by statements made about them.
In Foucault's 1975 study on the origins of the prison system, *Discipline and Punishment* he describes verticality as a more insidious dimension of oppression and repression, represented in the phrase ‘top down’.

Likewise Christanto in *Kekerasan I* articulates that violence is not only a physical act but is omnipresent in society. Poststructuralists such as Foucault were being read in Indonesia in the 1980s facilitated by the return of doctoral students who had studied in France (Ariel Heryanto in correspondence with Gray, May 2 2007). Somewhat belatedly, Foucault's theories also had currency with Australian critics and writers in the 1990s, corresponding with Christanto's emergence on the Australian art scene.

The first work in the series *Kekerasan (I)* will be the focus of my discussion. It is one in a series of four sculptures of the same title. *Kekerasan* was also the title given by Christanto for a series of performances. The context of the first showing of the sculpture *Kekerasan (I)* in 1995 was highly significant because it was first displayed in the exhibition *Perkara Tanah (Concerning Land)* at the Bentara Budaya Gallery in Yogyakarta. This was Christanto’s first solo exhibition in Indonesia. Like many other exhibitions in Indonesia and Southeast Asia generally *Perkara Tanah* addressed pressing issues of economic, social, cultural and political marginalisation. At the time there was an increasing awareness of and involvement in community activism in Indonesia that targeted the destructive practices of the New Order regime - especially in relation to land usage. The revival of the *Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru* movement in 1984 occurred concurrently with this rising community consciousness. As we have seen, in *Pasaraya Dunia Fantasi*, the subject matter of many artworks in this exhibition were intended to give voice to the artists' concerns about rapid urbanisation.\(^{28}\) For many, the cultural and spiritual significance of the natural environment was in danger of being subsumed in a process of rapid modernisation, thus linking the symbolic soil of the rural poor with the process of urbanisation. The *Kekerasan* series, consisting of four works in total, continued this theme and were created at a time when Christanto was living at Nitiprayan Bantul, an area with many cottage industries including pottery and brick making. In this way we can see, as with *Earth man* in which Christanto's entire body is covered in clay, the continuing use of low cost, everyday materials.
Kekerasan (I) is a sculptural installation consisting of more than two hundred ceramic human heads piled up in a pyramid construction. The square base of the pyramid extends over approximately two meters and roughly one meter in height. The ceramic heads, each approximately ten centimetres in diameter, are piled in vertical and horizontal rows one on top of the other.

Each individual head is constructed in low fired terracotta earthenware and although the heads are stylistically similarly formed, the features of each face the eyes, nose and mouth, are individually modelled. Mouths are a key symbolic feature of the Kekerasan series: while the mouths on the lower rungs are closed, those at the top are open, suggesting those at the bottom are unable to speak. Collectively the faces stare out towards the audience as if to speak metaphorically to the political, cultural and social hierarchies which privilege those at the top. Javanese society in general can be characterised by hierarchical systems such as peasant, landlord, village head, state subdistrict head, district head, and governor.

The pyramidal structure is perhaps one of the most striking features of Kekerasan (I). The structural formation of this piece, represented by the shape of a pyramid, refers to the hierarchical systems that pervade everyday life. For Christanto the army is a classic example of a hierarchical system with generals at the top of the pyramid and privates at the bottom. Such hierarchies typically separate those who make decisions at the top of the pyramid, from those who deliver and are affected by them at the bottom. Christanto states:

This kind of pyramidal [sic] construction is very strong. A social construct like this represents the [general] idea of pure power. But unfortunately, there are too many victims for me to build it [in a representative] way. Foremost among the victims are those at the lowest level. And that one at the pinnacle at the top? He does not absorb any burden, not like those who are below. Yet [the] lower down they are the greater their suffering (Christanto quoted in Wright 1998 37).

In the context of the exhibition Perkara Tanah, the pyramid structure chosen by Christanto poignantly evoked the 'top - down' policies of the New Order governance which cataclysmically disrupted the cultural life and destroyed the livelihoods of rural people.
For Christanto the space created by the hollow of the head which is easily observed through the orifices / open spaces of the mouth, eyes and ears is exceptionally significant. As Wright (1995:10) observes:

the open mouths and intent expressions of the heads add an aural quality to the exhibition, making the viewer almost hear a voice singing, speaking, crying or screaming. The actively intoning open mouth (the imagined sound reinforced by rays of light within) ensures that these figures cannot be perceived as passive. They return the viewers' gaze and mix their voices with those of the audience.

Thus, through the use of open / closed space and positive / negative space Christanto extends the expressive power of the triangular form in *Kekerasan (I)*. Christanto manipulates the space of *Kekerasan (I)* to connect with the viewer as both simultaneously integrated with and separate from the artwork. Again in this way it elicits confusing power relations. The audience is both subject and object: the artwork elicits an ambiguous response because we identify with the victims and yet we stand outside as observers. The audience is witness to the pyramidal structure and we are therefore complicit.

The visual grammar employed by Christanto in sculpting the heads is also significant. The style can be described as an 'archaic' iconography that is evident in many of Christanto's two and three-dimensional artworks. It is crude hand modelling without the benefit of sophisticated tools. The form alludes to pre-modern societies who attributed symbolic and spiritual meaning to such roughly hewn objects such as ancestral figures. Hampatong figures for example were typically produced by the Dayak peoples of Kalimantan in Indonesia's west to operate in a metaphysical world. Through ceremony the figure is transformed from a carved piece of wood or bone to an animated form of power. Hampatong figures were typically carved for a specific purpose such as guardians of people or property to encourage fertility, guard rice, supply physical form for a dead soul to rest, or provide a physical form into which a sickness from a person can be transferred. In addition to the traditional form Christanto uses 'low' technology, hand modelling and gritty terra cotta clay of a type generally used for everyday pots, bricks and other ephemeral building materials in Javanese villages.
This commonly available clay can be fired using a basic hearth without need for refined equipment and is commonly associated with humble village industries.\textsuperscript{29} Low-fired earthenware can be commonly observed in traditional societies in Java and elsewhere in the Indonesian archipelago continuing until contemporary times. It is these societies that have been most marginalised throughout Indonesia in the process of modernisation that was particularly aggressive in early 1980s.

For instance, to enhance individual affluence, the New Order ruling elite undertook ‘land grabs’ in conjunction with unscrupulous developers whereby villagers were forcibly removed by the military from their lands with little or no remuneration (Choy Lee 1999 250).

Moreover Christanto deploys the inherent qualities of terra cotta clay to great effect. Christanto's defective firing marks are intentionally left in situ on the clay figures of Kekerasan (I). In Wright's (1996 77) discussion of Kekerasan (I) she points out that:

> the varied markings of ash from the firing process provides a symbolic message. Like the facial gestures, significance can be found by tracing the patterns and how they change from bottom to top of the pyramid structure.

Wright notes that these markings function as a symbol for the fire and pain in the human experience of violence. On another level they function as a symbolic geographical marker that identifies the land of origin as volcanic, where fire and ashes can at once mean entombment and fertility. Therefore in using ash, clay and firing process Christanto intends that the artwork embodies both entombment (death) and rebirth (fertility).

Christanto's clay figures are imperfect, like the authentic kasar (rough) peoples whose bodies are marked by toil, simple and honest lifestyles. In the same way as ancestral figures, Christanto's rough forms and coarse surfaces convey a sense of integrity and strength. Wayang puppets also commonly assume these kasar characteristics of disfigurement, broken teeth, and a limp: features distinct to the halus (refined) characters. Refined figures represent the elite who are attributed polished effeminate qualities and elongated bodies and limbs.
In the context of this thesis, the stylistic and symbolic portrayal of kasar figures in a rough form conveying a sense of integrity and strength, is noted in the artworks *Kekerasan (I)*, and *They give evidence* (1996 - 1997) and *Red rain* (1999 - 2002) discussed in Part Two.

In later versions of *Kekerasan (I)* Christanto gave greater emphasis to the mouths of the heads in the middle of the pyramid, making them tiny slits out of which no voice could possibly emerge. According to Christanto this was intended to signify a ‘lack’ of opportunity to have political voice. If unused, organs and body parts tend to wither. Wright (1998 37) suggests that by contrast the ears were absurdly enlarged, their size signifying the over-use of that organ in the political process.

Installed on the floor of a gallery *Kekerasan (I)* is positioned to enhance the audience response as witnesses to a spectacle. Thus, the audience is metaphorically placed in the position of a Greek chorus, participating in and commenting on the drama. The audience experiences a sense of physical and symbolic detachment but at the same time a sense of responsibility and empathy. Like the artist himself who, as part of the marginalised Chinese middle class, expresses an empathy with the lower classes. This tension in the artwork, between detachment and empathy, elicits contradictory feelings in the audience.

The reception to *Kekerasan (I)* displayed in galleries in the various countries suggests a wide ranging response to Christanto's artwork. In a discussion concerning the inaugural display of the *Kekerasan* in *Perkara Tanah* in Yogyakarta Wright asserts that:

> Most images or symbols presented in Indonesia reach audiences who are steeped in a long tradition of highly cultivated visual and associative literacy and this was further demonstrated by the enormous response that Dadang Christanto's 'Land Issues' exhibition generated in accompanying literature and in local and national media, much to the artist's own surprise. Clearly the event, a type of happening attended by a relatively few people from limited social strata left an aftertaste which caused commentary to spread much further, like rings in water where a piece of clay has been dropped (Wright 1996 77).

This Indonesian reading of Christanto’s artwork discussed thus far contrasts considerably with international responses.
*Kekerasan (I)* was selected for the exhibition *Tradition / Tension*, a groundbreaking survey of contemporary Southeast Asian art which was first displayed in New York and subsequently in Canada, Australia and Taiwan.

The exhibition worked to progress familiarity with contemporary Southeast Asian art to western audiences and dispel myths concerning timeless cultures from a monolithic Asia. Writing for the *New York Times* Holland Cotter (1996 1) states of the exhibition:

> Like any trial balloon, it carries the heavy responsibility of bringing unfamiliar work to a new audience.

> And contemporary art has not yet had the benefit, in the West at least, of the month-by-month, show-by-show weeding process of its New York counterparts, with the accompanying privilege of making mistakes in public, being forgiven and being invited to try again.

The western audiences of the touring *Tradition / Tension* exhibition did not possess the contextual urgency of land issues and political oppression in which the series was being produced as radical and threatening to an authoritative New Order regime - a regime which sought to sustain authority over public discourse so as to continue its exploitative practices. Moreover, to foreign audiences, a culturally nuanced reading of the earth derived materials in *Kekerasan (I)* was abstract and distant. Cotter observes (1996 39):

> In the polyglot cultures of Indonesia, for example, Animism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity are, for better or for worse, all active forces. Something of their ambivalent energy comes across in an altar like installation by Dadang Christanto’s titles "Kekerasan" ("Violence"), a pyramid of terra-cotta heads their mouths agape in what could be either communal prayer or a collective howl.

Again in this way we can observe that *Kekerasan I* realised universal readings. The confusing power relations evident in the artwork elicit an ambiguous response because we identify with the victims and yet we stand outside as observers. The critical response elicited by the artwork evident in articles such as that by Holland reveals art critics from the west eager but ill-equipped to consider localised, non-western trajectories. The New York art world and its critics, like any other art world or grouping are not autonomous. Rather they are part of a wider society driven by broader social, historical and political contexts.
To address such broader implications I will examine further the audience response in Part Three of this thesis, where I focus attention to the critical and institutional response to the Christanto work in Australia. Following his migration to Australia Christanto is first framed as a tragic victim from Indonesia, misunderstood as an artist in exile and subsequently, though to a lesser extent, as Muslim- fostering the ongoing focus on Christanto's life story. However the decade of Christanto's cultural production with which I am concerned also coincides with a radical shift in international world affairs, from the relatively benign era of the 1990s to a world polarised by the Iraq war (2003) and we need to understand how the placement of the artist altered in relation to this changing social and political context.

**Conclusion**

Representative of Christanto’s early career *Earth man* and *Kekerasan (I)* were exhibited and staged in numerous locations in Indonesia and internationally. In this chapter I showed how particular meanings were elicited in an Indonesian context where common experiences and performance is part of everyday life. By contrast in an international context the works engender other meanings.³⁰ We see that in this early phase of his career Christanto is predominately concerned with environmental and social issues. These works can clearly be observed as a synthesis of many of the ideas that he had encountered in Yogyakarta as a young man. His works are demonstrative of an eloquence that can be attributed to a sensibility developed in childhood in a village environment. Artworks such as *Earth man* and *Kekerasan (I)* demonstrate a connectedness to land and village peoples that his childhood experience cultivated and continued as part of the emerging political activism of this era. As I will show in Part Two and Part Three Christanto continues to make use of these symbolic materials throughout his life.
1 Nyoongah Mudrooroo (1990 24) in Writing from the Fringe: A Study of Modern Aboriginal Literature observes that 'the Aboriginal writer is a Janus-type figure with a face turned to the past and the other to the future while existing in a postmodern, multicultural Australia in which he or she must fight for cultural space'. Christanto, reminiscent of Mudrooroo's position, embraces this hybridised position, not as a 'badge of failure or denigration', but as a part of the 'contestational weave of cultures'.

2 Coppel (2005 6) questions the current trend of researching and presenting the Chinese population in isolation, which suggests that their experience of human rights violations and political violence is 'unique in the Indonesian experience'.

3 The identity card was often used as method of identification for isolating individuals for discriminatory practice.

4 Financial support (and in some instances primary care) of children whose parents are unable to care for them, is a familial cultural practice in Indonesia. Less commonly, this also occurs between families in neighbourhoods where no familial bonds exist. In both instances financial support for a child's education is common.

5 This notion is evocatively captured at the Monas (National Monument) in Jakarta where a series of dioramas narrate Indonesian history as a struggle to maintain the sanctity of the nation. In this way the events of 1965 and 1966 are equated with the earlier war against Dutch colonial rule as part of the survival of the nation.

6 In exchange for spices, merchants from the Middle East, China and India traded items such as textiles ceramics and gold and silver wares. Through exchange with Muslim traders, the region is considered the birthplace of Islam in Java and today, pilgrimages continue to be made to the region.

7 In this regard there is a shared historiography throughout the region. Traders and others including the Makassan fishers of the North Coast of Australia established second families in the alternate location. In particular, Makassan fishers developed complex social and cultural networks with the Yolgnu peoples of north-east Arnhem Land pre-dating European contact (Macknight 1969).

8 The Tegal population in the year 2000 numbered 236,900. Once thought of as a village Tegal is best characterised as a town - but it is not a regional centre.

9 Modernism has lead to a paradigm of the city as a site of transformation privileged over the country. For further discussion see Williams, Raymond. (1973) The country and the city. New York, Oxford University Press.

10 Also spelled Djokjakarta, Jogjakarta, Jokyakarta or Jokjakarta. This characterisation of Yogyakarta as a cultural centre results from the privileging of one Javanese regional history over others. See Reid, Anthony. (1979) "The nationalist quest for an Indonesian past" in Anthony Reid and David Marr. (eds). Perceptions of the past in Southeast Asia. Singapore, Heinemann Educational Books. p281 - 299

11 In an account of the demonstrations in Yogyakarta in May 1998 (prior to President Suharto's resignation) Marianto anecdotally reports that a banner was hung on a government building overhanging the procession to the kraton (Palace). A historic speech was to be made by the Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX at the kraton calling for support for the reformation process. The banner read 'Yogya is ready to become [the] capital' (Marianto 1998).

12 Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX supported Indonesia independence from the Dutch and Japanese occupation and declared the sultanate to be part of the Republic of Indonesia. In 1950 Yogyakarta was granted the status of Daerah Istimewa (Special Region Province) recognising the power of the Sultan in his own region's domestic affairs. Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono IX later diplomatically opposed the increasingly authoritative policies of Suharto supporting the reformation movement. Following his death, his son Sri Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, was elected governor of Yogyakarta in October 1988.

13 Other speakers included Adrian Buyung Nasution, a sociologist and lawyer and several close artist friends of the group (Marianto 2001 162).

14 During this period Christanto also studied with the painter’s group Pawiyatan Sanggar Bambu (1975 - 1977) and other cultural organisations including Sanggar Bambu (1978 – 1986); Sanggar Teater Bengkel (1979 - 1986); Rumah Budaya (1995 - 1999) and in Jakarta with the Urban Poor Consortium, Jakarta (1998 - undated).

15 In 1979 Indonesian military forces implemented a newly enacted 'normalisation of campuses' law repressing student activism.

16 Pusat Audio Visual Studio together with people from Balai Budaya Minomartani (Village Hall of Minomartani) started a community radio station in 1995. From 1995 - 1998 this station was popular among the villagers. The local government ceased the organisation’s operation in 1998 as it was without a license and was then banned from broadcasting. In response, a radio community movement...
lobbied to establish broadcasting laws. Eventually in late 2002 the Indonesian government signed a new broadcasting law enabling the broadcast of community radio (Studio Audio Visual Pusat 2008).

17 Romo Mangunwijaya was also an accomplished academic writing scientific, cultural and political article as part of his criticism of the ongoing marginalisation of the poor.

18 In 1994 Romo Mangunwijaya established Yayasan Edukasi Dasar (Basic Education Foundation) an alternative form of primary school in a poor community on the outskirts of Yogyakarta. The school piloted a dynamic approach to education. This was subsequently adopted at various schools throughout Indonesia (Khudori 2001). The Basic Education model may have been inspired by the example in Latin America from Friere Augustus Bollard.

19 During Romo Mangunwijaya’s teenage years the experience of war was, in his own words, ‘unforgettable and determined my later attitudes’ (Mangunwijaya quoted in Khudori 2001 1). An active member of the Tentara Pelajar Republik Indonesia (Students’ Army) Romo Mangunwijaya recognised through personal experience the generosity and courage of the farmers and villagers who hid insurgents, provided food and risked interrogation by the colonial army. Following independence, Romo Mangunwijaya came to understand that he owed, as did the nation, a debt to the orang kecil (small person) who had made the real sacrifices and were the true heroes of the war.

20 For further discussion on the role of the World Bank see Moore, David. (2007), The World Bank, Scottsville, South Africa, University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.


22 The exhibition also included Fendi Siregar, Haris Purnama, Siti Adiyati, Taufan Soekarno, Bernice, Gendut Ryanto and FX Harsono.


24 Exclusivity is only one of many competing associations of painting. For example the medium was a key method of expression by the artists such as Hendra Gunawan supporting the Independence movement to abolish colonial rule. That is, political and cultural activism is not confined to performance art processes. This is especially evident in Yogyakarta where there is a tradition of painters working with and amongst peoples' struggles.

25 All of these artists have featured in the QAG, APT series.

26 Kererasan I (alongside the another earlier graphic work from Christanto's Hearts and Minds series) is in the collection of Dr Oei Hong Djien, an influential private collector widely regarded as having established the first and only comprehensive historical collection of Indonesian Visual Art where the government bodies have been unable or unwilling to do so (Rath 2005).

27 The performance I'm human being (1992) at the Daimaru Shopping Center in Fukuoka, Japan is considered by Christanto as part of the Earth man series (Christanto in interview with Gray, November 30 2003).

28 See 2nd Yokohama International Open-Air Art Exhibition (2000)

29 Marianto (1996 81) points out that the words 'making terracotta' and 'trading terracotta' seldom come into urban vocabulary. That is to imply that such materials associated with the rural poor are not considered worthy of exploration in contemporary art as part of the modern experience

30 Thus each location is contextualised by diverse local cultural, geographical and political circumstances. In this way the artworks generate different meanings in different locations and each individual member of the audience brings to their interpretation cultural background and life experiences. Displayed in varied international locations Christanto’s artworks 'collective' meanings have in turn contributed to the 'internationalism' and 'universalism' of the artist’s oeuvre.
PART TWO

Introduction

The second section of this dissertation examines Christanto's migrant experience following the artist's migration to Australia and settlement in Darwin in 1999. My assertion is that Christanto's lived experience of migration affected thematic and stylistic changes in the artist's creative output. In this section I consider Christanto's initial experiences of migration and its impact on his artistic philosophy in a self-reflexive response to these experiences. I then consider the impact of these personal, cultural, historical and political experiences on the development of his creative work.

As acknowledged in the Introduction, Christanto’s migration to Australia in 1999 is one of the three key critical junctures where gaps and misunderstandings occur in the critical response to the artist's work. I argue that the Australian art world understood Dadang Christanto in relation to existing east / west stereotypes of the exotic other and the artist as tragic hero. These romanticising mythologies allowed Christanto’s migration to Australia and its impact on his artistic development to be misunderstood. Indeed the common presumption still exists that Christanto came to Australia as a political refugee to escape persecution in Indonesia. In turn these misunderstandings have ensured that the critical response examined Christanto's migrant experiences in generalised terms but failed to consider a more nuanced interpretation which takes into account the particular context of his migration and the specific social, political circumstances in Australia which influenced his experience of migration.

In order to provide a context for Christanto's experiences I begin in chapter three with a theoretical analysis of the idea of diaspora. The expansive nature of diasporic theory and its many ramifications provides a rich variety of approaches with which to analyse Christanto’s artwork and his migrant experience.
The influence of Christanto's earlier experience of ethnicity and identity as discussed in Part One will be revisited and amplified. Chapter four comprises a more focussed analysis of two key artworks created in the years immediately following Christanto's settlement in Australia: Red rain (1998 - 2000) and Count project (1999 - 2004). These major pieces are ambitious in conception and execution and were subsequently exhibited extensively in Indonesia and Australia.
CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

By drawing upon historical experiences of migration and diasporic theory, chapter three will provide a contemporary context for Dadang Christanto. We will examine how Christanto’s particular experiences impact on the development of his artistic philosophy and his artistic practice. Christanto’s migration to Australia in 1999 coincided with an extraordinarily rich period in contemporary art in Australia in which museums and art galleries were newly responding to artists and agendas of access and representation. In acknowledgement that modernism has its own distinctive regional trajectories, a growing interest in Southeast Asian art transpires. This critical context created an entirely new approach to artists on the part of museums: interest in personal biography, cultural identity, and genres such as installations and performance art. This rich period includes Christanto’s participation in the third APT (Brisbane 1999), his employment as a Lecturer in Painting at the Art School, Charles Darwin University (1999 - 2003, Darwin) plus numerous exhibitions in Indonesia and Australia.

In this chapter consideration will be given to the underlying reasons motivating Dadang Christanto’s migration. Prior to his migration Christanto had already established a considerable reputation in Australia with residencies and exhibitions. Indeed it is of crucial importance to acknowledge that Christanto arrived not as a political refugee but primarily for aspirational reasons associated with the future well being of his family and education of his children. Undoubtedly Christanto also chose to migrate to live in a country that provided him with greater freedom of personal expression with new opportunities to develop his art career.
As we shall see, residency in Australia enabled Christanto to focus on the historical experiences of Indonesians like himself under the New Order regime and in so doing Christanto expanded his repertoire to address broader, more universal issues of human rights and the democratic rights to social justice.
Diaspora contested

Diasporic theory has made an invaluable contribution to our understanding of postmodernism and it is the recurring theme on which I focus in this chapter. Through the insights provided by diasporic theory we have come to acknowledge a more complex and pluralistic understanding of the intercultural. This understanding is situated within a globalised view of migration that simultaneously reflects cultural and regional differences. Such an understanding reveals the relation between personal life stories and a contemporary politics of cultural identity.

Diaspora emerged to importance in post World War One. However it is important to recognise that diaspora is a fluid and ambiguous term which has been put to use to describe the process of migration in a range of contexts and for a multitude of reasons. As we shall see diaspora plays a crucial role in the response to Dadang Christanto driven by an archetypal model of migration which becomes, in part, the framework for the critical response to Christanto and his artwork. Thus there is an imperative need to historicise diaspora and differentiate between the various ways it has been used over time. Crucially there is a sense in which diasporic theory tends to operate as a meta-narrative and fails to interweave the micro-narrative of an individual’s experience of migration. For example in the case of Dadang Christanto, we need to consider what experiences, both negative and positive, transpired as a consequence of migration.

Speaking in 1995 Prime Minster Keating stated 'We have consciously devised policies to encourage and preserve this diversity and gain in return benefits to the nation and community. We count the creation of this rich, pluralistic and peaceful society we think one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world as one of our great national achievements'. A shift in public perception may have impacted on Christanto and his family as to whether Southeast Asian migrants like Christanto were initially viewed in sympathetic terms as a flow on from the Vietnamese boat people. When border crossing is explicitly defined as exile rather than immigration per se, it advances a host of important distinctions to be considered. When Christanto and his family migrated to Darwin in 1999, he was already well known with a well established artistic reputation: to what extent did this impact on his migrant experiences?
If it can be argued Christanto’s initial immersion into an unfamiliar culture was more easily effected because he settled in Darwin, then we need to understand what are the characteristics of Darwin that support this claim? On reflection, what is the perception of Christanto, and of others, in relation to the impact of these experiences on his art practice of this period?

Diaspora is a word of Greek origin meaning to sow over or scatter. In the modern world the Jewish experience of the Holocaust has come to exemplify the diasporic archetype, possessing qualities of forced expulsion and dispersal, persecution, a sense of loss and a vision of return. Post World War Two migration became a pervasive experience worldwide, but the reasons for which people migrated became increasingly complex including political, economic and personal motivations. In the instance of Christanto, earlier political, historical and cultural experiences - as well as the trauma of his father’s disappearance - were motivating factors, but his decision to migrate was ultimately taken for economic reasons. Thus emerges the first of the misinterpretations by critics and curators, a disjuncture between Christanto's actual experiences of migration and an interpretation driven by a romantic archetype.

The second misreading by critics and audiences of Christanto's experience can be observed in the changing response to migration. As we shall see there is a stark dichotomy between the response to early migrants prior to the World Wars and the need to reflect upon these experiences in subsequent generations. Following World War Two the term diaspora was in common usage as a term of self-identification among the many and varied groups who migrated or whose forbearers had migrated from one place to another or to several destinations. These first generations that migrated for a range of complex motivations - including a desire to leave trauma behind - tended not to write their own histories concerning their experiences of the migration. As Chinese Australian curator Binghui Huangfu (2005 49) observes:

When you move among first generation immigrants you are often struck by the sense of connection people have to their culture of origin while at the same time seeing their struggle to embrace a new environment.

By contrast, for the children of second and third generation migrants, scrutiny of their families' experiences is more likely to become a central issue of identity.
The writing of second and third generation migrants results in a vast amount of literature including revisionist histories and debates around history and memory and the formation of cultural and personal identity. Crucially their writings, traced through plural and particularised expressions, reveal the interconnectivity of identity, memory and forgetting. I argue that the contemporary debates raised by these issues play a crucial role in the museological response to Christanto. Part Two, chapter three, investigates the four years following Christanto's migration to Darwin, Australia in 1999, whilst chapter four looks specifically at the works *Red rain* (1999 - 2001) and *Count project* (1999 - 2004). In Part Three I am concerned with the impact of the archetypal model of diaspora evident in the context in which Christanto's work is viewed in art and in museums and gallery environments.

All people participate in a selective process of remembering and forgetting in the construction of identity. As discussed in chapter one, the construction of an individual's identity is entwined with memory; who you are depends on what you remember. However memories are contained not only in the private recollections of individuals, but they exist as part of public representations of history. Collective memory is given further currency via modern technologies contributing to 'imagined communities' as posited by Benedict Anderson (1983). Like nations, then, diasporic 'communities' also require memories in order to construct coherent identities. Hence diasporic communities are engaged in a continual process of negotiation whereby particular narratives and representations of the past are held up for questioning and reconsideration to be reproduced and reframed in the construction of new identities (Halbwachs 1941 1992).

Christanto's experience of migration occurred in the contemporary era, when earlier ideas of assimilation had been put aside in favour of new, more pluralistic, concepts of multiculturalism. In the Australian context multiculturalism was associated with Paul Keating's 'big picture' vision of Australia connected to the wider world (Cavew 1991). Although Keating's policies of multiculturalism were not without problems, under his leadership, migrants to Australia were encouraged to maintain the culture and language as an assertion of their freedom to establish an individual identity. With increased technological capacity allowing them to 'keep in touch', migrants could perceive themselves as members of global diasporas.
That is, as Ien Ang (2003 143) has pointed out, migrants are less inclined to see themselves as minorities within nation states than as part of broader diasporas that span national identities. Following Anderson, Ang (2003 144) argues that, like nations, diasporas are best seen as 'imagined communities'. Hence many, but by no means all, contemporary migrants identify as part of a self-described diaspora. Because they have not necessarily been forced into exile it follows that they do not necessarily possess the traumatised, melancholic aspects once associated with the earlier archetypal models. Rather they emphasise culturally creative, socially dynamic and often romantic assertions.

However the problem that we face with Dadang Christanto is that the interpretation of his migration is largely romanticised and fails to adequately reflect his experiences. In Paul Gilroy's (1997 332) examination of the etymological origins of diaspora he makes evident the problems inherent in such a response. In Gilroy's analysis of diaspora, the ‘scattering’ of peoples is closely associated with the idea of ‘sowing seed'. In this context inheritance becomes a ‘mixed blessing' that accords primary value to what is being scattered against the supposed uniformity of that which is being scattered. By contrast Homi Bhabha's (1995) theory of cultural hybridity encourages us to recognise that all cultural relations are ambivalent and hybrid. Bhabha's notion of hybridity is not intended to demarcate a 'new' multiculturalism. Rather through his idea of the Third Space of Enunciation, Bhabha acknowledges the instability and ambivalences in 'knowledge-production' or representations. Bhabha displaces essentialised models of identity and nationhood that are limited by binary oppositions. In so doing he creates a space for other more complex positions to emerge. In Bhabha's view, the multiple allegiances and hybrid identities of minority and migratory ethnic groups reveals not just a border-land or 'in-between' existence but, more profoundly, establish new structures of community, nation, identity and history. Bhabha's Third Space is of use in addressing the critical response to Christanto in that we face bias concerning Christanto which largely romanticises his experience and fails to reflect his migration experience in satisfactory accounts. In Christanto's narrative his experience of migrations was symbolically reduced to stand in for 'every' Indonesian. Instead I argue that the experience of Dadang Christanto's migration is a two-way, or, as Bhabha has suggested, a multifarious exchange.
Bhabha's Third Space of Enunciation posits that an inherent purity and originality of cultures is ‘untenable’. These insights provide a framework with which to understand the written materials and other 'constructed' representations of Christanto and why his experience both in Indonesia and his migrant experience have been represented in terms of a naturalised mythology. This aspect will be addressed again in greater detail in Part Three in relation to the critical response by Australian commentators following migration, wherein the commentary fails to move beyond terms of both exotic other and tragic victim. In Part Three, I will investigate this aspect of naturalised mythology in relation to the reception of Christanto.

**Chinese diasporas**
These revisionist understandings of diaspora offer us a means of reinterpreting Christanto's evocation of his 'Chineseness'. If, as Gilroy suggests, diaspora tends to assert the importance of what is being scattered over the supposed unity and essence of that which is being scattered then the Chinese and Indian diasporas are excellent illustrations of this point. China is the world’s fourth largest country by land mass whose people represent many cultures and languages. Over centuries Chinese peoples have emigrated from distinct regional, social and economic circumstances and at different junctures in time. Thus the Chinese diaspora is a consummate 'imagined community'. The very conception of 'Chineseness' therefore has a geographical specificity. By way of example, in Indonesia, 'Chineseness' has a different lived specificity in the urban city of Yogyakarta in Java compared with the rural village of Tegal, also in Central Java. In turn, Chinese peoples' leadership in the establishment and characterisation of the region has affected contemporary relationships to place and identity in subsequent generations. As discussed, Christanto was born in Central Java and is of Chinese ancestry. Both his mother and father are ethnic Chinese. Nevertheless Christanto’s formative experiences in Tegal can be compared with his experiences as a young adult in Yogyakarta. Similarly within Australia, the lived experience of a Chinese identity is vastly different, for example, between Sydney and Darwin. In general terms the Chinese community of Darwin embody people whose heritage is connected 'to place' shared across many generations. In the process of migration Christanto's Chinese identity contains his experiences of these places: Tegal, Yogyakarta, Sydney and Darwin. Thus Dean Chan (2000) challenges the evocation of a recovered and recoverable 'Chineseness'.
He argues that in artists and writers of Chinese descent domiciled in Australia, a critical response 'may be ascribed to these diasporic subjects as an authentic, singular and unchanging referent' (Chan 2000 142). He goes further to suggest however, that such a representation of diasporic subjects is a fictional, totalising notion of 'Chineseness' in opposition to a totalising notion of 'Australianness' (Chan 2000 112 142). Hence there is a risk that, in the critical analysis of Christanto, his artwork, like that of many diasporic artists, has a tendency to be interpreted reductively in terms of these totalising and essentialising ideas.

In contrast I argue in chapters three and four that Christanto's diasporic experience prompted new directions of investigation in his artwork. Christanto experienced feelings of detachment, as critic and curator Farah Wardani suggests in dealing with the feeling of displacement that intrigues him as a foreigner in a foreign land, and a sense of distance with his homeland, the place that used to be his 'battlefield', as an ethnic minority citizen who possesses a persona trauma from a memory of a tragedy among collective amnesia (Wardani, English translation, 2005 12).

As we shall see artworks such as Red rain and Count project achieve a high level of complexity, and the idea of a constructed identity is crucial to the understanding of Christanto's appropriation of art materials on the basis of them being as a 'Chinese ethnic icon'.

**Diasporic Australia**

In Australia, Ang (2003 152) argues we live in a paradoxical situation where cultural hybridity is still experienced as dangerous or difficult despite the fact that it is pervasive. She attributes this paradox to Australia's long history of racial exclusion and the emphasis given to a homogenous Anglo Saxon identity that has been historically privileged. Ang (2003 143) goes further to point out that this is a privileging of social order as a 'naturalised principle'. Australia is a young settler colony grounded in Anglo Saxon origins and racial exclusion. This is clearly evident in the White Australia Policy (implemented in 1901 and not entirely officially abandoned until the 1970s) and the failure of the nation to recognise Indigenous people under the Federal Government until the Commonwealth Referendum of 1967.5
Indeed the heterogeneity of the population is generally overlooked including the ongoing presence of Chinese immigrants who have arrived since the time of the ‘gold rush’ in the eighteenth century. These successive waves of migration have resulted in quite significant populations. For example, in the Northern Territory in 1882, the second largest demographic group after the Indigenous population were the so-called 'Asiatic', peoples (2734) of mostly Chinese ethnicity, who outnumbered 'Europeans' (717), (Coe 1990 14).\(^6\) The colonisation of Australia has involved the negotiation of cultural differences - between Indigenous peoples and settlers, and between the different settler groups. Initially, under policies of assimilation in the twentieth century migrants were expected to integrate as quickly as possible and adopt the ideas, values and lifestyle of mainstream Australians. However by the 1960s it was realised that people did not simply forget where they come from and that cultural diversity enriched society. Immigrants’ contributions span several generations, their children and their children's children can be evidenced, not isolated and peripheral to an imagined homogenous mono-culture, but as a cornerstone in all aspects of contemporary Australian life.\(^7\) In Australia and elsewhere since the 1990s technological advances have made the movement of people and ideas across national borders more possible. The notion of a home or of a multitude of cultures and nations makes the concept of home and belonging increasingly pluralised. As Salman Rushdie (quoted in Christine Clark 2005 11) contends, 'The truest eye may now belong to the migrant’s double vision'. Thus the experience of migration to Australia was a catalyst for Christanto to reflect upon issues of identity to reconsider his own and others' perceptions of his identity.

Darwin, in particular, played a critical role in this process. Many claims profess the uniqueness of Darwin, as art historian Anita Angel (2002 72) observes, as a place paradoxically portrayed as beyond, yet part of, the ‘real Australia’. Its early European history as the northern frontier has in turn fuelled its own civic sense of uniqueness. This popular notion has been constructed historically upon a number of factors: its relative remoteness to the administrative arm of the colonial government; the continuing presence of Indigenous peoples and their culture; its multicultural population and the relative transience of the white population.
Artist and curator Cath Bowdler (2005 11) observes 'Western and non-western art modes are informed by these conditions [the relative transience of white population with the continuous presence of the original inhabitants] and some very innovative and particular responses by artists of both cultures have emerged'. Geographically speaking Darwin is closer to Jakarta than Sydney and is recognised for being one of the more multicultural cities in Australia. Historian Glen Dimond (2002) observes the uniqueness of Darwin is not in being a multicultural city but that the population, its families and individuals are multicultural: 'On the streets you see so many 'mixed-race' families. Darwin has a huge Aboriginal population and a lot of Aboriginal families have names like Ah Mat and Ah Kit and of course the Rioli’s' (Dimond 2002). Conceivably Christanto’s initial immersion into an unfamiliar culture was more easily effected because he settled in Darwin on account of the employment offer from the local university. In particular the 'Top End' has a distinctly Asian influence not only because of its cultural heritage prior to the 1880s which ensures that Chinese make up the largest ethnic group after the Indigenous population, but also because of the significant East Timorese and Indonesian connection and the size and prominence of the Pilipino and Thai communities.

**Christanto: a life in Darwin**

Dadang Christanto is an adventurous person who seeks new opportunities and experiences and could have settled in many parts of the globe. Christanto chose Darwin because he was offered a three year lecturing contract at the local university and because he was already familiar with life in Australia. He had a good network of friends and colleagues scattered across Australia which he had extended through artist's residencies. Dadang Christanto arrived in Darwin 29 January 1999 with his wife Yuliana Kusumastuti and their four year old son Tukgunung Tan Aren. Dadang (Christanto in interview with Gray, December 3 2004) recalls his first impressions of Darwin in those first few weeks as a very exciting time of exploration:

> For anyone [who arrives], you want to go looking [and] enjoy. For me it was also like that. I think when I came here, this is very exciting. I want to know about everything. What is Kakadu, what is Alice Springs?
The same positive and joyous embrace of Darwin and its environs emerges in an account derived through an interview conducted with Christanto in 2004, by writer and broadcaster Andrea Stretton:

Here [in Darwin, Dadang Christanto] has found a light feeling of ‘being in transit’ which he believes is good for an artist. When he is away [from the town] he misses its proximity to the sea, the lush, tropical gardens, and the sound of hot summer rain drumming on the tin roof. [Christanto] likes Darwin’s humidity, and says his body feels strange and claustrophobic when there are no hot summer nights and he cannot perspire (Stretton 2004 273).

In both statements it becomes clear that climatically Christanto felt at home in Darwin he could feel commonalities with Indonesian climate. At the Charles Darwin University Christanto’s primary responsibility was to supervise students through lectures, tutorials and individual tuition. He shared studio-based instruction with artists: Indigenous artist Judy Watson, Non-Indigenous artists Ann Ooms and Marina Baker and New Zealand artist Peter Adsett. In addition Christanto also provided occasional lectures in Southeast Asian art history, focusing on Indonesia. He also supervised two post graduate students both of whom were Japanese born. Christanto would become crucial to Yoshie Mizuno and Midoki Oki’s art training. Previously their art education was primarily focused on two-dimensional drawing and painting whereas Christanto focused primarily on performance and installation. Christanto appreciated the fact that working alongside lecturers and students fostered the development of relationships not previously available to him in short-term residencies. In Australia and overseas, such individual and shared experiences deepened Christanto’s understanding of everyday life with insights into the individual experiences, motivations, passions and frustrations of art practice in a small, relatively remote, tertiary art school.

But on the other hand Christanto's experience of tertiary art education was very different to that which he had experienced in his own art school training. Christanto was affected by uncustomary social attitudes and values in student / staff relationships. According to Christanto, in Indonesian art schools, the staff and educational philosophy remains influenced by early nineteenth century European models. In Yogyakarta (Christanto interview with Gray, December 3 2004, Darwin) he explains:
The day to day relationship between student and their lecturer was based on respect for the lecturer as an elder within the social structure, and students were thereby compromised by the taste of the lecturer.

By contrast, Christanto found the rapport far more informal in an Australian context. The uncustomary attitudes offered both gains and losses but would have furthered his mixed feelings and ambiguity of his teaching role. At this time Christanto often spoke of the not-so-positive experiences of being stuck in academia.

At the university, Christanto played a crucial role in the establishment of exchange programs and residencies between Indonesian and Australian artists, writers and art historians. Whilst Christanto was teaching at the university, he returned to Indonesia on several occasions for family and professional reasons: in November 1999 - January 2000 and again in December 2000 - January 2001 in order to maintain links with his homeland. To this end, he also hosted colleagues for residencies in Darwin: Dwi Marianto (1999), Ivan Sagito (1999), Hendro Wiyanto (2002), Rifky Effendy (2005) and Caroline Rika Winata (2005). Many, including art historian and academic Dwi Marianto, and artist Ivan Sagito (b1957) visited Darwin enroute home to Indonesia from the APT. Sagito held a solo exhibition *Freezing Time* at the University and proofed a suite of lithographs with the then Workshop Manager at Northern Editions, Dian Darmansjah. Hendro Wiyanto undertook research for an upcoming exhibition in Jakarta, *Unspeakable Horror* (2002). Writer and curator Rifky Effendy and artist Caroline Rika Winata (b1976) were associated with the *Arafura Craft Exchange* at MAGNT. Through his connections with Indonesia, Christanto was able to arrange for a touring exhibition of works by staff and students to Indonesia. *Undone*, curated by Peter Adsett and Anne Ooms, was exhibited in Darwin and Bali in 2001. This touring exhibition was directly facilitated by Dadang Christanto and gallery owner and artist Made Wianta (b1949) in Bali. These personal invitations from Christanto to respected Indonesian, artists, writers and curators contributed to the dynamism of the art and cultural life of the University and broader community in Darwin.
Migration and the artist’s oeuvre

I now turn to a consideration of the impact of migration on Dadang’s development as an artist. Migration was dynamic for Christanto, creating a feeling of being in transience which was more productive than negative for his art practice. Christanto felt at home in Darwin: he could revisit his homeland and he could further his career there, as well as embark on a host of new opportunities in Australia. These included opportunities for exhibitions and being represented by commercial galleries such as Raft, Darwin and Sherman Galleries, Sydney, thus fulfilling the economic side of his reasons for migration. In discussion Christanto would later acknowledge that the social and political environment of Australia made him more 'open' and 'independent' (Christanto quoted in Gray 2005 38). According to Christanto from the experience of being a migrant in Australia he gained considerable freedom and he became more self reliant and resourceful. Most importantly for Dadang Christanto, Australia provided a more open political climate, a new environment which allowed the artist more space for personal contemplation. In using the term 'open' Christanto makes specific reference to his father’s abduction. Unlike Indonesia, where Christanto and his family were prevented from speaking about their traumatic experiences, Australia offered a Third Space where Christanto was free to speak without fear of retribution.

Nevertheless while it is important to recognise the primary experience of migration as a productive influence on Christanto's creative output, it is important to avoid a reductive, deterministic model. My aim in this discussion is to explore the relationship of identity, belonging and place, with the artist’s creative output. The psychological and physiological factors that contribute to an individual’s sense of identity - involving a process of forgetting and remembering - implies a subjective and transformative process that translates information and experience into meaningful forms.

But Christanto found that independence demanded a greater degree of responsibility. In Australia Christanto found that he had to take responsibility for the entire process of art-making. As Christanto observes:
In Yogyakarta [one is] too spoiled. Because of the conditions of the worker in Australia [here it] is different, Here [in Australia] you should be doing everything yourself. But in Yogyakarta if I want to make it like this [indicates a large scale work], maybe I can hire someone to [make it how] I want, but here [in Australia that] is not possible' (Christanto quoted in Gray 2004 38).

For example in the production of Red rain, the first major work created in Darwin, Christanto recalls that in the production process he had to consider the packaging and storage of the final work, realising for the first time that the generous storage facilities of Yogyakarta were no longer available to him. And there were social differences, compared with Australia; the dynamic of the Indonesian art community is extraordinarily social: in his studio in an artist’s precinct on the outskirts of Yogyakarta, Christanto would receive regular visits. While this social interaction was very welcome, it was nevertheless difficult if not impossible to maintain a rigid schedule. By contrast, in Australia in his Darwin studio, Christanto was able to maintain a continuous art practice, because there were no ongoing distractions of visiting friends and artists as would occur in Yogyakarta (Christanto in interview with Gray, 18 February 2005).

Christanto’s migration to Australia did not mean that Christanto abandoned his Indonesian culture. Following his arrival in Australia Christanto did not relinquish the ideas and values formulated in childhood and fundamental to his worldview: as Christanto has stated ‘my audience is still Indonesia’ (Christanto 2003). As already shown, Christanto continued an active presence in Indonesia whilst resident in Australia and a commitment to social, political and cultural activism in Indonesia. As I will later show, in the context of the APT, Christanto advanced public discussion on the events of 1965 and 1966. Thus Indonesia continued to provide the major thematic concern of Christanto’s artwork. On the other hand, transformations did occur as a result of his migration and residency in Australia which created new opportunities, new perspectives. This more complex and ambiguous sense of cultural identity led Christanto to a new understanding of the writings in Orientalism by Edward Said.
Christanto had previously read a translation of Said's influential work in Indonesia. As we have seen, Said proposed that the 'western' understanding of 'other' cultures remains built on a colonial vision and creates an unnatural binary of 'us' and the 'other'. Yet it was only in rereading Said in Australia, having lived the complexity of the migrant experience, that Christanto truly understood Said's notion of 'the other'. 'Here I am Asian' says Christanto (quoted in Gray 2005 38). Here Christanto detects tendencies in daily interactions, current events, media portrayals and governmental legislation for a diversity of cultures to be identified as 'Asian'. Such ethnic stereotypes are reflected in Eurocentric ideas. According to Christanto, he experienced a shift in his identity as understood in Australia, no longer Chinese nor Javanese, but rather a Said binary of Asian other. At the same time, living in Australia Christanto sees Indonesia as foreign - yet he retains his Chinese / Indonesian world view. This is a richer, more complicated and contested understanding of identity which Christanto would not have experienced if he had not chosen to migrate.

Some of this ambiguity would emerge in the context of the APT. In the course of this thesis I hope to show the APT as a significant development that redresses the gap around Southeast Asian contemporary art and provides Christanto with an extraordinary opportunity to present his work with institutional support. In Part Three (chapters five and six) this overall positive experience will be critiqued in terms of the (mis)interpretation of Christanto within a sequence of stereotypes: as exotic other and tragic victim. In Indonesia Christanto considers himself an outsider. In contrast, through his transient experience in Australia, he is no longer an outsider but becomes the 'other'. In Bhabha's terms, what we see here is the instability and ambivalences of notions of identity, in which an essentialised model is jettisoned for more complex positions to emerge. We now turn our attention in the following chapter to explore how the migrant experience is expressed in the themes and stylistic development of Christanto's artwork.
Plate 6
Dadang Christanto

_Hujan merah / Red rain_ 1999 - 2001
Ink, joss paper, plastic and yarn
900 x 400 x 500 cms
Collection of the National Gallery of Australia,
Gift of Gene and Brian Sherman 2003,
Canberra, Australia
Photographer unknown
Plate 7

Dadang Christanto

Hujan merah / Red rain (detail) 1999 - 2001

Ink, joss paper, plastic and yarn

900 x 400 x 500 cms

Collection of the National Gallery of Australia,
Gift of Gene and Brian Sherman 2003,
Canberra, Australia

Photographer unknown
Plate 8

Dadang Christanto

*Count project* 1999

Paper, pencil, pen, ink washes and coffee on paper

194 x 132 cms

Contemporary Territory, 21 February - 3 May 2004,
Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia

Collection of the Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory,
acquired 2004, Darwin, Australia

Photographer Gilbert Herrada
Plate 9

Dadang Christanto

*Count project* (detail) 1999

Paper, pencil, pen, ink washes and coffee on paper

194 x 132 cms

Contemporary Territory, 21 February - 3 May 2004,
Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia

Collection of the Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory,
acquired 2004, Darwin, Australia

Photographer Gilbert Herrada
CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

This chapter will focus in depth on the first two major artworks undertaken by Christanto following his migration in Australia: Red rain (1999 - 2001) (Plates 6 and 7) and Count project (1999 - 2004) (Plates 8 and 9). As we have seen from the discussion in chapter three, the migrant experience led Christanto to reflect increasingly on issues of identity and personal history. In this chapter I want to explore how the migrant experience is expressed in the themes and stylistic development of Christanto's artwork. I argue that while the artworks he creates continue to address past and current events in Indonesia, increasingly Christanto is concerned with communicating more universal experiences of loss and grief. Thus universalism emerges as a key theme in his work.

As we have learned, a lived experience is a subjective process of identity, memory and forgetting. Christanto was born in Central Java and is of Chinese ancestry. Experiences from Christanto's childhood in Tegal contributed to his feeling an outsider in Indonesian society. Once embedded in childhood memories, these feelings have remained with Christanto and continued to influence his worldview. In the process of migration Christanto's Chinese identity is therefore an amalgam of his experiences of these places: Tegal, Yogyakarta, Sydney and Darwin. But Dadang sees himself as not part of any single Chinese, Indonesian or Australian community. Rather as we have seen he occupies an ambiguous hybridised Third Space:

If I try to … reflect about where my place is, I am still [an] outsider, I am [an] outsider. Even when I am in Indonesia, I am [an] outsider. I am not part of [the] Chinese [community]. I am not of part of Indonesia (Christanto interview with Gray, 18 February 2005).

As we will observe Christanto’s work moved beyond the particular historical, political and cultural events of his youth in Indonesia to encompass a more universal human experiences. As a direct outcome of his experience of migration Christanto came to objectify the past and draw upon it, positioning his own experience within the broader streams of history.
Christanto is now detached from the local social context in Indonesia and is now part of a broader international community. This is a different universalism from modernist claims to universalism against which he and Gerakan Seni Baru rebelled in Indonesia.

*Red rain* and the *Count project*, the two artworks considered here, are linked by their shared iconography and many thematic correspondences. Both were begun in 1999 and created simultaneously over a period of years. However each is a distinct work and will be considered individually. While *Red rain* was created in the years 1999 - 2001 the *Count project* was begun in 1999 and is considered by the artist to be an ongoing project though the titled series ceases in 2004.

There are many commonalities between both artworks, some of the visual elements common to both *Red rain* and the *Count project* include, firstly, alternating texts in Indonesian, Javanese and English. This 'code switching' between two or more registers of written languages (Weinreich 1953 and Gumperz 1982) will be addressed later in the chapter. Secondly, numbers and dates can also be observed as a thematic and stylistic device throughout this period of Christanto’s work. Thirdly, multiples and repetitions represent a recurring element which I discuss in depth later in this chapter.

*Red rain*

*Red rain* consists of one thousand, nine hundred and sixty-five laminated pieces of joss paper, approximately postcard size, placed in rows, installed on the ceiling of the gallery. The votive cards are arranged in a rectangular shape, in sympathy with the rectangular dimensions of the various gallery spaces in which it has been displayed. On each piece of joss paper, Christanto has represented a head depicted frontally. Each head is rendered quite summarily with simple, direct brushwork. That is, there is a very limited pictorial description of hair, nose, and eyes and therefore little sense of gender, ethnicity or individualism is indicated. As in *Kekerasan* to which I have already referred in Part One, Christanto employs an archaic iconography. The faces, like archaic Indonesian sculpture, are representations of the lower class.
Christanto, in his use of archaic iconography, is making a very powerful statement in relation to ideas of universalism. In reflecting on his intention in using this type of visual and symbolic iconography Christanto says: 'I don't want to make stereotypes, for example that poor people must be thin. . . . [I] make figures that look like statues of Buddha. Big chest, soft fat formless bodies. Poor people have evolved enormous hearts because of their suffering' (Christanto quoted in Wiyanto 2003 48). 12 In this statement Christanto challenges the stereotype of the tragic figure. Informed by a postmodernist emphasis on a 'history from below', Christanto acknowledges that the poor have agency and therefore should not represented as passive victims, anonymous and insignificant, but strong like Buddha.

On each drawn head, a black slit appears on the forehead. Each of the heads is disfigured by this gash and an accompanying red line. This slit might be interpreted as the symbolic site of the body where memories are kept. Alternatively, as Christine Clark (2004 106) observes, it may represent the locale of the 'third eye' as understood in Buddhist traditions. In certain eastern and western spiritual traditions the third eye is a metaphysical concept of the Chakra typically referring to a state of enlightenment. Many Hindu deities have a Tilak in the middle of the forehead and followers may also wear Tilak between the eyebrows to represent this third eye referring in part to Anja (brow) or Chakra. Generally in New Age spirituality, the third eye may alternatively symbolise a state of enlightenment and the evocation of deeply-personal, spiritual or psychological significance. The compositional element of the slit provides spatial density, and also a ghostly quality. As Australian art historian Sasha Grishin observes (2004 49), 'Red rain on first encounter, appeared as an object of innocent beauty, like a shower. . . '. From this slit falls red yarn, pooling, like clotted blood, on the gallery floor.

I have referred previously to the multiple numbers and dates that emerge as a recurring theme in Christanto's art works. In Red rain, the number of heads, 1965, is a reference to the year in which the bloody uprising occurred, in what was to become Suharto’s New Order regime. Red rain is intended as a wordless prayer to the artist’s father (Wiyanto 2004 50).
As we have learned, it was in the environment of 1965, amidst the political and societal unrest of accusations and abductions in which Christanto’s father was seized by military personnel and was subsequently not heard from again. Christanto was eight at the time. Thereafter it was impossible for the family to mention his father’s death - to do so, Christanto maintains, would have been tantamount to suicide on account of retribution from the regime, vigilante groups and more subtle, yet damaging, social ostracisation. But in keeping the secret, this self-censorship became like a sickness. In this way the tragic events of 1965 wounded not only the direct victims of the violence but a whole generation of Indonesians. As historian Robert Cribb (2004 142) writes 'The victims left behind families who for decades - even still today - bore the stigma of association with fathers, mothers, brothers or sisters who had been identified as traitors to the nation'. Thus, Christanto reflects, that when he became a father and his growing family asked about their grandfather 'I couldn’t keep lying to my children' (Christanto quoted in Wiyanto 2004 49).

For that reason Red rain 'emerged from an urgent need to articulate repressed feelings of loss and grief following Christanto's move to Australia' (Christine Clark 2005 108). But in addition, once Christanto had become a father himself, an imperative need existed to reconnect and re-identify with his own childhood experience through his son. Significantly in 1999, Christanto's son Tukgunung Tan Aren turned eight - the same age as Christanto when his father 'disappeared'. Simply put, a generation later, Christanto returned to his childhood experiences, reliving them through his son’s name. In this way can see demonstrated how the symbolism of Christanto’s work moved beyond the particular historical, political and cultural events of his childhood in Indonesia to encompass a more universal human experience of tragedy, influenced by developments in his own personal life which allowed him to move on and take a new responsibility on behalf of his son.

Christanto's intent in making Red rain as a memorial to his father possesses undeniable integrity and poignancy but, as Indonesian commentator Nirwan Dewanto (2002 9) observes, the artist is more than his biography.
As many writers have shown, Christanto's artwork transcends specific human tragedies and identifiable political events by encouraging audiences to reflect upon the suffering and oppression that human beings inflict upon each other. As Turner (2005 124) observes:

> His art is not to be confined to any specific ideology or locality; as is demonstrated again and again by the fact that it resonates with viewers who have no notion of any political content or background, although one obviously can appreciate the significance of many of them more fully if one does have some knowledge of the background. But the fact is that audiences respond to his works in terms of their own experience of human tragedy.

In Part Three I return to the debate on universalism in the context of museology and political art. However what is significant here is that whilst the impetus for *Red rain* was driven by Christanto’s personal history and disporic experiences, the work is generally interpreted outside these specific contexts.

I am maintaining that this universal reading is intended by Christanto and built into the structure and aim of the artwork. The 1,965 drawings installed on the ceiling in *Red rain* are viewed at such a distance that the heads of the victims are perceived and conceived as an assembly. Thus the not inconsiderable mass of heads that makes up the *Red rain* installation, become like a crowd where the individual victim cannot be counted. The grid-like placement of the votive card images also contributes to this mass memorial or commemorative quality. Likewise the placement of the drawings on joss paper on the ceiling, each with yarn floating down to the ground, is suggestive of oscillating souls. I will argue in Part Three that artworks like *Red rain* connect to the idea of the counter memorial and address a wider crisis of representation. As discussed, following the major upheavals of the twentieth century, it was possible for monuments to be transformed from the heroic, self-aggrandising celebratory figurative icons of an earlier historical era to explore a more complex and contested role embodying an anti-heroic, often ironic and self-effacing stance. Thus the *Red rain* installation in its uncounted mass of heads, the ordered, even militaristic placement of the votive cards and with their symbolic reference to the Indonesian identity cards embodies these contested ‘darker moments’ of history.

In addition to commemorating the 1965 Indonesian tragedy, *Red rain* also alludes to the discrimination against ethnic Chinese under the New Order regime.
As I have already referred in chapter one, although the Christanto family were, to a degree, integrated into the local community, like other members of the Chinese Indonesian community, they experienced oppression and discrimination. In *Red rain* this discrimination is suggested through the symbolism of laminate fused with joss paper, with references to official laminated Indonesian identity cards. Such cards were used by authorities to identify and target minority groups including the Chinese and mete out discriminatory practices. In this way *Red Rain* gives testimony to the victimised and more specifically provides, as Wiyanto points out, a record of the events of 1965.

In an interesting addition to the discussion on *Red rain* Christanto states that it was the first time he consciously selected art materials on the basis of them being a 'Chinese ethnic icon' (Christanto in interview with Gray, 30 November 2003). It was a self-conscious and purposeful area of investigation, both in materials and as subject matter. Utilising joss paper, rice paper, calligraphy, and a limited palette of red, black and brown, a deliberate and distinctive 'Chinese' character emerges through the conjuncture of several elements. The stylistic device of repeated motifs common to Chinese painting, textiles and ceramics is evidenced in the use of large amounts of negative or white space and in the use of calligraphic style brushwork.

Christanto's selection of materials in execution of the artwork *Red rain* directly relates to the artist's migrant experience. Diaspora experiences offered Christanto a means of reinterpreting an evocation of his 'Chineseness'. The Chinese diaspora is a consummate 'imagined community' and its constructed identity is evident in Christanto's appropriation in *Red rain* of art materials on the basis of them being a 'Chinese ethnic icon' (Christanto in interview with Gray, 30 November 2003). As we have seen Christanto's experiences of being Chinese in childhood Tegal and as a young man in Yogyakarta are somewhat ambiguous. He was accepted as a child, somewhat assimilated in the larger Javanese society although experiencing some discrimination. In addition as a young man he was accepted by an enlightened Yogyakarta intelligentsia. However at the same time, in the years prior to 1998, a New Order ruling was in place prohibiting public expressions of Chinese culture.
Chinese Indonesians experienced increasingly prejudicial laws such as forced migration, exclusion from education, the prohibition of public speaking or the use of Chinese languages (including the publication of Chinese literature). Here I am simply maintaining that Christanto's experience as a Chinese artist is deeply ambivalent and politicised. Some of this ambiguity seems to follow Christanto’s migration between, on the one hand, Christanto thinking of himself as an outsider and not part of the Chinese community in Indonesia or Australia, and on the other his exploration of his Chinese identity.

Artworks, such as *Red rain* and *Count project*, achieve a high level of complexity. This straightforward assertion arises from the need to recuperate value for Christanto's artwork. Needless to say there is a risk that Christanto’s artwork, like that of many diasporic artists, is interpreted reductively in relation to totalising and essentialising ideas of 'Chineseness' as Chan (2000) has cautioned. Whilst it is true that Christanto's diasporic experience precipitated new directions of investigation in his artwork articulated as a complex bond of memory and forgetting, identity, belonging and place, it should be emphasised that these new directions were equally weighted by, and coalesced with, Christanto becoming a father. Indeed it can be argued that, through the artist's relationship with his son, an imperative need emerged to reconnect and re-identify with his own childhood experiences. My leading argument in this discussion is that these experiences resulted in *Red rain* being recast with a more universal reading in an increasing complex and nuanced visual language. Works such as *Red rain* and *Count project* explore a more complex and contested role embodying an anti-heroic, often ironic and self-effacing stance, detailing history's 'darker moments'.

**Count project**
Darwin was, for Christanto, his first long-term residence outside Indonesia to which I have already referred. Inevitably his relocation to Darwin involved the challenge of creating new artwork in a foreign country and culture. But in addition two decisive international events occurred, which gave the artist further cause for reflection. They were the East Timor referendum and the millennium celebrations. Both these international events were motivating factors in the creation of the *Count project* and they directly impacted on the development of the artwork.
Television footage of the East Timor referendum was first viewed by Christanto during a visit to Australia in 1998. The shocking events depicted in the television footage prompted Christanto to once more consider the victims of large scale systemic violence. In the Count project series, the heads are not the victims of plague or a natural disaster but those who have died because of violence. Christanto began the Count project in December 1999, a time marked by the optimism and celebration of the third millennium. Yet at the same time Christanto was concerned lest the violence of the twentieth century might be forgotten: 'I am frightened these things are still hidden and people won't talk about it. Even the war in Afghanistan is being forgotten. And this is my project - still counting and still remembering' (Christanto quoted in Higson 2003 15). The Count project series of images are delicately constructed and intentionally ambiguous in a cultural sense, speaking universally to an audience of the preciousness of life. In particular Turner (2005 122) concurs that Christanto sees himself, together with all other people, essentially as pilgrims that is, people who possess value as human beings. This concept, it should be emphasised, extensively underpins Christanto's creative intent. The notion of the pilgrim transcends national boundaries and can be linked to Bhabha's notion of the Third Space.

At the same time the Count project represents Christanto’s further exploration of the unrecorded history of the 1965 and 1966 massacres in Indonesia. These events are manifestly a major part of Christanto's oeuvre and often involve figures as large-scale installations of multiple life-size human figures or body parts. The principle theme of this series of works involves the counting of victims. In the Count project Christanto has rendered multiple heads on large sheets of rice paper. The iconography is related to that employed in Red rain in that each head is rendered very rapidly with fresh, seemingly uncomplicated brushwork. The brushwork provides limited pictorial detail for the hair, nose, and eyes and thus, little sense of gender, ethnicity or individualism is indicated. The works of the Count Project series are uniformly created on large sheets of rice paper with drawn and painterly marks in black and red ink and coffee. Thus the Count project series utilises the same limited palette found in Red rain: red, black and brown. Red signifies the bloodshed and brown the soil. A black line marks the head.
In the *Count project*, the smallest of marks - or even a dot - is symbolic of a victim. In part, the works appears as a record of a performative, cathartic event. The heads of the victims are rendered anonymously and gesturally as if by a process of semi-automatic unconscious drawing. Intriguingly the marks are also reminiscent of the energy of expert batik-making - itself seen to be a meditative act. As we have seen according to batik artists Fliam and Ismoyo (Brahma tirta sari) the system of *empu* is critical to the production of good batik cloth. *Empu* is a Javanese term for a master craftsman who has excellent technical skills, a deep philosophical grounding in the craft and esoteric abilities in meditative practice which is vital in creation of sacred objects.

As we have seen Indonesian, Javanese and English script are manifested in the *Count project* series. Some severed heads are depicted covered with large disembodied hands - occasionally inscribed with the words such as ‘hand of Suharto’s regime’ or ‘U.S. hand’. The inscription refers to the covert support of the incoming President Suharto in 1965 by the American Government now identified by researchers such as P. D Scott (1985). In Christanto's case, the code switching between languages also contributes to the universal message of the artwork, implicating not just the Suharto regime but other ostensibly democratic governments like that in the United States of America.

This alternation is what linguists refer to as 'code switching' (Weinreich 1953) which is the switching between two or more languages or dialect registers in spoken or written language (Gumperz 1982). Linguists observe that commonly the switch lasts only for a few sentences, or even for a single phrase. Linguistic studies affirm that code switching is commonly used when a person living in a different country to the language which they usually speak finds that they have no relevant translation of a word, expression or concept created in the country in which they are now living. Code switching is common in the use of profanities: a particular word explains a feeling, situation or emotion better than another. In general terms Indonesians love to play with language, which allows the speaker to exhibit a quick wit and verbal dexterity in social situations. Wordplay is found in linguistic traditions across the Indonesian archipelago.
In response to questions concerning his use of English, Indonesian and Javanese in
the *Count project*, Christanto explains: ‘for example if I use in English the word 'dog'
as a derogatory term] it does not have the same meaning for me than if I use the
Bahasa [word] 'anjing' (dog)’ (Christanto in interview with Gray, November 2003).
Whilst it is true in general terms that Indonesians are particularly adept at wordplay it
seems reasonable to conclude that Christanto would not have used this code
switching to the same extent if it were not for the experience of migration.
Conclusion
I have shown the migrant experience led Christanto to reflect increasingly on issues of identity and personal history and at the same time his practice moved towards notions of universalism. As discussed, Bhabha posits that an inherent purity and originality of cultures is untenable. Instead he offers an alternative in the Third Space. Christanto’s ideology also worked towards a shared vision of humanity while at the same time as critiquing the constant devaluing of humanity to economic definitions. Christanto's evocation of the pilgrim transcends national boundaries and can also be linked to Bhabha's notion of the Third Space. This intention for the Count project is reflected in part in the counting of victims, that is, the artwork is intended to literally make each person count. In this way the Count project and Red rain are not specific to Indonesia but assume wider universal meanings. Indeed it is intended that these works act as a means to make each person count whose death or suffering has been caused by other human beings. In so doing each victim is counted and therefore no longer invisible - each will be memorialised.

This chapter has provided a detailed critical analysis of the two major artworks Red rain and Count project, produced in the years immediately following Christanto’s migration to Australia. It is evident that the migrant experience led Christanto to reflect increasingly on cultural identity and personal history. Diasporic writings by Gilroy, Ang and Chan illuminate an analysis of the artworks, which in part offer an alternative to a romanticised and mythologised conception of the artist.

Christanto has experienced the lived complexity of Said’s Orientalism and Bhabha's Third Space entangled with a geographical specificity of 'Chineseness'. In creating a personal memorial for his father (Wiyanto 2004 50) Christanto has imbued the works Red rain and Count project with this complexity.

Red rain and Count project continue to address past and current events in Indonesia, but increasingly, Christanto is concerned with communicating more universal experiences of loss and grief. The works are generally interpreted outside specific contexts and remain culturally ambiguous. In Part Three I return to the debate on universalism discussed in the Introduction in the context of museology and political art.
1 Christanto, prior to his migration to Australia in 1999, had already received major international acclaim. He had been invited to important survey exhibitions of contemporary art. These included the First Asia Pacific Triennial, Queensland Art Gallery (1993); Havana Bienalle (1994); Osaka Triennial (1995); and the touring exhibition Tradition and Tension in New York in 1996. Solo exhibitions, performances and/or short term residencies prior to 1999 include Indonesia, Australia, Canada, Germany and Switzerland.

2 British sociologist Adrian Favell (2001 391) observes that in recent years cultural theorists have entered the field of diaspora (somewhat negating sociologists) with a tendency to assert observations in which 'real people give way to flows, images and virtual connection, agency to the intersection of 'things' and 'desires'.

3 The Greek term diaspora corresponds to the meaning of exile and it appears in the Greek version of the Old Testament (Van Den Biesen 1908). Diaspora is used thus: 'The Jews therefore said among themselves: Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? Will he go unto the dispersed among the Gentiles'. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles (2002) provides the following: The dispersion of Jews among the Gentile Nations; all those Jews who live outside the biblical land of Israel; (the situation of) any body of people living outside of their traditional homeland.

4 This notion of multiculturalism introduced by Keating and embraced in the 1990s was later abandoned by the Howard government and since September 11 2001 positively spurned by influential government and media representatives.

5 The abolition of the policy took place over 45 years as subsequent governments gradually dismantled the policy from 1949 until 1973 (Department of Immigration).

6 As Dimond (2002 11) observes 'That so many Chinese had managed to enter Australia before Federation remained a hotly debated issue in relation to settling the tropical north. Some recognised it as the one major reason the Territory had survived at all and others saw it as a threatening contamination for the rest of Australia'.

7 As Crang (1998 173) observes 'Countries need not be viewed as discrete containers, but be recognised for their mutual entanglement'. Crang states that this assertion is not a simplistic celebration of diversity. Instead, he affirms, 'it allows us to look at the particular junctures and conjunctures that, in turn, give rise to particular meanings and forms'.

8 Dadang and Yuliana were expecting their second child at the time. A daughter, Embun Tan Aren, was born on the 23 February 1999 at the Darwin Royal Hospital.

9 Undone launched a refurbished Seputih gallery located in central Denpasar, Bali.

10 Unspeakable Horror is the foremost example of where Christanto contributed to this more open dialogue, however its detailed analysis is beyond the scope of the thesis presented here.


12 Stated by Christanto in discussion of They give evidence (1996 - 1997).

PART THREE

Introduction

This third and final section of this dissertation (chapters five and six) locates Christanto’s work within the broader context of Australian museology. In this section I propose that recognition for contemporary Southeast Asian art in general and Christanto in particular is predicated on a growing museological awareness on the part of Australian writers, curators and critics in which the postmodernism and new museology provide the catalyst for this radical shift in direction. From the outset Christanto is seen in the context of postmodernism, postcolonialism and the new museology which swept through museums and galleries in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. The ‘new museology’ argued for a new, more pluralistic approach on the part of cultural and collecting institutions where meanings were open ended and more engaged with the community in contrast with earlier monolithic models and approaches to national collections. An important aspect of the new museology strategies in an Australian context was the incorporation of Australia within a wider geographical Asia - Pacific region. The APT was undoubtedly a foremost initiative of this strategy. In this section we observe how dramatic shifts in collection and display of institutions encompassed within the new museology create a critical and curatorial space in which value and meaning for Dadang Christanto and his work could occur.

As my thesis argues, the emphasis on the tragic personal circumstances of the artist’s biography in conjunction with his supposed status as a political refugee and his representation as exotic other, focused attention on a single, monolithic reading of Christanto’s work. Yet my study of Christanto’s Indonesian context and his experience of migration revealed a more complex picture. Initially Christanto is concerned with the poor and marginalised in Indonesia. With the greater freedom available to him in Australia he is able to begin addressing his personal history.
But as I hope to show in this chapter, Christanto is also crucially concerned with a universal aspect that allows his work to be understood and appreciated not simply as political activism but in terms of the postmodern idea of the counter memorial.

This section examines a very complex process of cultural production over the period 1991 - 2003 focusing in particular on the reception to Christanto's artwork. I will begin in chapter five with an analysis of the critical response to three exhibitions by Christanto: his first solo exhibition *Dadang Christanto, contemporary Indonesian artist*, Adelaide 1991; his representation in the first and third APT, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, 1993 and 1999; and finally his contribution to *Art and Human Rights*, Australia National University (ANU), Canberra, 2003. In my analysis I draw upon the available body of writing concerning these exhibitions and broader, related events to examine shifts in discussions and critical debate concerning Christanto's work in Australia.

In chapter six, I focus in depth on a single artwork, the performance piece *Litsus: portrait of a family* (2003) as part of *Art and Human Rights* at ANU. I will examine this confrontational performance which directly implicated the audience in acts of violence toward Christanto and his son to ask, what are the particular circumstances surrounding *Litsus* whereby Christanto is able to address violent episodes in his personal history in the Australian context? In my analysis the idea of the counter memorial emerges as crucial in providing a more complex understanding of the critical response to Dadang Christanto and his oeuvre. I argue that in the profound intersection between public art and political memory, the monument is transformed to fulfil a more complex and contested role which reflected wider aesthetic and political revolutions.

My critical analysis of the reception of Christanto by the Australian art world raises many questions for debate. One question is, what was the nature of the strategies available to artists, curators and critics and how did they enable the interpretation and contextualisation of Christanto's oeuvre in Australian context?
While contrasts can be drawn between the Indonesian context and the new museology which swept through the Australian art world allowing recognition for the work of Christanto and contemporary Indigenous artists openly critical of political power, at the same time my thesis demonstrates the apparent gap which exists between the rhetoric and reality of the new museology in relation to a more complex understanding for Dadang Christanto.
CHAPTER FIVE

Introduction

Underpinning this chapter is the idea of cultural production. As Janet Wolff (1988) persuasively argues, meaning is not invested in the artwork at the point of creation but rather meanings are made and remade in the process production, marketing and reception. Nevertheless the process of cultural production can be very complicated and potentially problematic for a contemporary Southeast Asian artist caught up in a globalising process of diaspora and intercultural exchange. In this dissertation on Dadang Christanto I have identified gaps, tensions and misunderstandings generated around the artist and the critical response to his art work. As discussed Christanto was generally understood in terms of the twin paradigms created by the art historical traditions of the artist as tragic genius and victim of personal circumstances and as exotic other. Together these twin paradigms allow Christanto to achieve extraordinary success within a brief period of time but they also work to his disadvantage limiting and restricting in depth understanding and analysis of his work. Most particularly Christanto is crucially concerned with a universal aspect that allows his work to be understood not simply as political activism but in terms of the postmodern idea of the counter memorial.

The catalysts for the radical shift in awareness of contemporary Southeast Asian art by Australian writers, curators, artists and critics were the ideas of postmodernism and postcolonialism and the new museology which occurred in Australian institutions in the 1980s and 1990s. The new museology represented a move toward the notion of the museum as a 'forum' that could include a plurality of voices and ideas. The revolution it has achieved contrasts with earlier models. As a legacy of its nineteenth century ‘temple’ origins, it was assumed that the museum narrated imagined certainties. However its authoritative position was subsequently challenged towards the end of the twentieth century when the new museology shifted the role of the museum from the celebratory and often didactic model presented by the concept of 'temple' toward the notion of 'forum'.
This implied that the museum would reflect conflicting and contesting views for public debates (Katz 2004). The aims of the new museology as authority Ivan Karp (1991) has noted, were to negotiate cultural differences and raise issues of access and identity. The new museology called for museums to enact equitable representation to all sectors of society particularly by those who had been traditionally excluded (McIntyre quoted in Windshuttle 2001 12). The new museology would be crucial for the critical response to Christanto.

Whilst the intent of the new museology, moving from 'temple' to 'forum' was radical even revolutionary, it was not without its problems. Here I begin to explore the idea of the gap between the rhetoric and reality of the new museum which is a key aspect of my argument about the critical response to Christanto. In a paper on the Canberra City Museum, gallery director Angela Philp (1999 74) raises questions around the idealism and the reality of the new museology. Philp says 'In antiquity the forum was designated as a place for public debate. Let's not naively imagine such forums (in ancient Rome, for instance) as places of free democratic exchange. There were rules about who could enter and participate in the forum (as with museums)'. Philp’s hypothesis is of relevance here in creating awareness of the methodological and structural change required and the political will in which to negotiate and engage with the new museology. This argument offers a means of interrogating the new museology - interventions have to disrupt not just the conservative establishment but its epistemologies. Suggesting that paradigms endure raises a critical issue in my analysis of the response to Christanto. In the institutional agency and response to Christanto did the canon and the epistemologies remain unquestioned?

**The Australian art world in context**

Postmodernism, and its rejection of international modernism in favour of regionalism, can be seen to first emerge in Australia through a series of major events and residences organised around the *Artists Regional Exchange (ARX)* beginning in 1987. ARX was a Perth based organisation which coordinated biennial exchange programs bringing a diverse range of Australian and Asian artists, writers and curators together to work collaboratively.
According to art historian Pamela Zeplin (1999 237) 'by 1993 established ARX networks throughout South East Asia provided an essential knowledge base and interpersonal linkages’ for the development of the APT at Queensland Art Gallery in 1993. An initiative under the direction of Doug Hall and Caroline Turner the APT was a series of programs over a decade that aimed to build a critical dialogue concerning contemporary Asian art that was otherwise absent. Its aims and intent are important because it moved away from the traditional focus on solo exhibitions and generalised surveys to explore an innovative and complex curatorial process.

In conjunction with ARX and APT we see new policies emerging for the collection and display of contemporary Southeast Asian art in Australian galleries. For example at the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) Robyn Maxwell develops a major collection of Southeast Asian textiles, whilst it was works of Japanese and Chinese cultures that came to dominate the collection at the Art Gallery of New South Wales through the curatorship of Jackie Menzies. At the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, through the work of Fiona Liebrick and James Bennett, there is a focus on the neighbouring region with the only Asian collection in Australia to acquire exclusively Southeast Asian art and material culture. Nevertheless all these institutions are differently located in relation to the Australian art world and have different agendas.

Alongside these institutional developments there is growing interest on the part of academics, critics and artists in relation to contemporary Southeast Asian art. Writers and critics in art journals such as *Art Asia Pacific, Artlink, Eyeline* and *Art Monthly* are crucial to these debates. John Clark's groundbreaking conference *Modernity and Post Modernity in Asian Art* at ANU in 1991 also provided an important public forum and this conference in particular worked to radically shift the perception of critics and curators marking a radical break with earlier perceptions of Southeast Asia viewed in relation to the exotic and historical. These developments are primed by contemporary developments in performance and installation and they provide new venues and wider audience for these art forms.
From the outset we see individual writers and critics such as Stephanie Radok and Erica Green who are knowledgeable about Southeast Asian art and interpret the work of Christanto from within a postmodernism perspective with a particular focus on regionalism and cultural ethnicity.

At the same time the contribution of Asian Australian artists provide agency with an axis of activity around Gallery 4A in Sydney. Some of the gaps in knowledge are reflected in the Australian art world's oversight of Asian Australian artists in the activities of the time. An artists’ run space, Gallery 4A consistently showed works by Asian Australia artists. According to Nicholas Jose (2001), its initial achievement was to avoid being pigeon-holed by moving questions of identity beyond multiculturalism to a more dynamic model. It also looked to question and challenge a binary oppositional for Australia and Asia. Working tactically with an Asian Australian nexus during the 1990s Gallery 4A’s activities featured touring exhibitions such as *Bright and Shining* (Sydney 1999 - 2000) and the later *Asian Traffic* (Sydney 2004 - 2006).

Nevertheless these developments in the Australian art world cannot be understood without reference to a wider political social cultural and economic context concerning Australia’s relationship with the Southeast Asian region generally and in Southeast Asian contemporary art in particular. Indeed the decade examined in this chapter coincides with an extraordinary efflorescence of interest in the Southeast Asian region. This heightened consciousness can be related in part to the ‘institutional rush’ of the late 1990s (James Bennett 1996) ignited by the Hawke - Keating government’s vision of Australia’s place in the Southeast Asian region (Fink 2002). In retrospect we now see that the Hawke-Keating years represented a brief euphoric moment before Australia returned to a conservative era under the leadership of John Howard. But for the purposes of my thesis, the halcyon days of Hawke - Keating rapprochement with Indonesia and overture to Southeast Asia is critical to understanding the dramatic changes which take place in the Australian art world during this period.
During government Prime Minister Paul Keating’s agenda included the Australian republic, reconciliation with Australia's Indigenous peoples, multiculturalism and a new political economic and cultural engagement with Asia. Artist Pat Hoffie (2005 523) observes, 'This dedication to recognising Australian identity as being composed of a more heterogeneous, ethnically diverse group of people went hand in hand with a commitment to contemporary art as a means of visualising change in attitude'. But it is important to note that in 1993, when Keating won a fifth term for the Australian Labour Party (ALP) his platform of reforms was met with growing resistance. According to political commentators, multiculturalism - a key reform agenda - was already on the wane in the domestic public domain. From the outset Keating’s agenda was not without its difficulties: the separation between Australia and Southeast Asia on account of Australia's European origins as a British colony and its identification with England as the 'mother country' continued to resonate strongly.

For example, Malaysian President Dr Mahathir saw Keating as an easy target and repeatedly drew attention to Australia’s double standards: the lack of recognition and equal rights for Australia’s Indigenous people whilst the nation postured as moral 'policeman' in the Southeast Asian region. These ambivalent relationships are critical to understanding the dramatic shifts occurring in which individuals and organisations in the Australian art world take different positions.

Nevertheless Keating’s initiatives undoubtedly fostered growing recognition for Southeast Asia. In the Australian art world fashionable trends are often accompanied by a mad scramble to play ‘catch up’ with everyone else, succinctly captured in James Bennett's (1996) phrase ‘institutional rush’. In the same way there are connections in the early 1990s between foreign affairs and the art world's 'push' into Southeast Asia. This is identified by several commentators at the time. Thai art historian Apinan Poshyananda (1993 5) for one, notes:

If sport has become imperative for countries to use as a launching pad for trade and foreign policy, then 'selling nations' as works of art has become like slippery lubricants that make political mechanisms function with ease.

Can the role of foreign affairs and trade be seen to be driving the interest in Southeast Asian art as Poshyananda implies?
While there is an element of truth in Poshyananda’s observation, it is important to acknowledge, as theorist Pierre Bourdieu (1984 226-8) has done, that the art world is only semi-autonomous. Artists themselves consider the period differently. Philippine artist Santiago Bose attests that:

This was not only a time [1990s] for Australians to get to know other artists in the region, it was a time in which artists from across the region started to realise the commonalities and differences of the cultural development within their own particular communities (Bose 1993 cited by Hoffie 2005 517).

By contrast Australian artist Pat Hoffie took a more negative view. In 1997 a slogan on a banner for an installation at the end of her four-month Asialink residency by the artist read ‘international cultural exchange as the lubricant for economic intercourse’ (Hoffie 2005 528). Possibly the political context in Australia closely tied to Prime Minister Keating’s fortunes made the belated recognition for Southeast Asia somewhat compromised. However in my thesis I argue for a productive and nuanced response. Writer and critic Chris Mc Auliffe (1994 102) observes artists may be constrained by the political historical and cultural circumstances in which they operate - there will be both opportunities and limitations - but they are not necessarily implicated themselves. Individuals are free to make their own choice. Additionally we need be mindful that this cross cultural rapprochement occurred within particular historical circumstances shaped by wider forces. It is ironic that coincidental with this decade of rapprochement with Southeast Asia which enabled Dadang Christanto to achieve national and international recognition, extraordinary international events intervened that would transform global politics. As we shall see these international events directly impact on Christanto and the reception to his artwork.

In global terms the hi-jacked aircraft and terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and subsequent invasion of Afghanistan, the ‘war on terror’ and invasion of Iraq by the 'coalition of the willing’ irretrievably fractured international relations and created a worldwide focus on refugees and terrorism. Far from being abstract ethical questions, the global movement of refugees raised questions of citizenship, national identity and civil liberties. Increasingly protectionist laws such as the Federal Anti-Terrorism Bill 2005 enacted by the Australian Government raised concerns about civil rights: at the very heart of which was how ‘citizens’ treat ‘foreigners’ amongst ‘us’.
Simultaneously cataclysmic experiences were transpiring in Indonesia. The shooting of Timorese pro-Independence demonstrators by Indonesian military in Dili in 1991 were widely broadcasted in Australian media. The Timorese plight elicited Australian sympathies especially on account of the earlier deaths of four Australian journalists in Balibo in 1975. Relations with Indonesia, (a predominantly Muslin nation), already unsettled by Australia's involvement in the so-called ‘war on terror’ as an ally of the United States in the war in Iraq, were further fractured by the terrorist bombings in Bali of 2002 and 2005.

As we will see Christanto responded to these events and in turn they impacted on his reception by the Australian art world. In a little over a decade Australia’s relationship with Indonesia had moved from a local rapprochement between the two countries driven by political and cultural interests to a polarised world. In one sense east / west divisions revolving around the invasion of Iraq divides the contemporary world pitting Christian against Muslim. Much had transpired globally, as artist Pat Hoffie (2005 518) pointed out, 'The bombing of two Balinese nightclubs became the final straw for a nation [Australia] all too ready to shift its alliance back into step with Euro-American perspectives'. Hence in the broader community perception, stereotypes continued to prevail in the popular understanding and, in turn, impacted on the Australian art world. Once viewed as a cheap exotic tourist destination, increasingly Indonesia was reviled as a Muslim terrorist other. In 2002 Tim Lindsey observed that:

... in popular Australian perceptions, Indonesian visual art is usually viewed in the reductionist terms of Islam and the 'alien' Orient as embodied in traditional cultures, predominately Javanese and Balinese. A wayang figure, a page of Islamic calligraphy and a Balinese woodcarving come close to summing up popular Australian understanding of Indonesian arts. A photograph of the Dili massacre would complete the set of images of our Northern neighbour (Lindsey 2002 11).

Thus apart from foreign affairs and a growing number of scholars in the area, Australians at large brought little in depth knowledge to recent events in Indonesian history. In general Indonesia's politics were and are viewed almost exclusively in terms of its implications for Australian domestic politics. As discussed earlier a unique imagining of Indonesia exists in Australia as an intensely reduced, one-dimensional politicised notion of the nation.
Dadang Christanto and the Australian art world

I turn now to an in depth analysis of the critical response to Christanto 1991 - 2003 in relation to the development of his artistic career. Christanto's first solo show in Australia took place in 1991 at the University of South Australia, Adelaide. That Christanto was, at the time, still a resident of Indonesia makes this a very innovative exhibition given the dearth of knowledge about Southeast Asian Art. It is not surprising that critics generally used their commentary to reflect on this situation. When Christanto participated in the first APT in 1993, he was still residing in Indonesia. By 1999 Christanto had migrated to Australia and initially lived in Darwin. It is indicative of Christanto’s growing reputation that in 2003 he is invited to participate in the Art and Human Rights project in Canberra and in the same year he is selected as Indonesia’s representative in the Venice Biennale. Thus the growing recognition for Christanto is more than an 'institutional rush', his work was immediately acclaimed as quite extraordinary from its very first public showing in Indonesia and his first solo exhibition which took place in Australia in 1991 prior to the development of the APT. However Christanto’s migration in 1999 coincided with an extraordinarily rich period in contemporary art in Australia.

Context is of course all important and before turning to a detailed critical analysis of Christanto’s major works during this decade, it is important to point out the differences between the various contexts in which Dadang Christanto’s artwork was exhibited. For example Adelaide, the location of Christanto’s first one person show in 1991, is a very important cultural city (by way of Adelaide Festival, Artlink, Australian Network for Art and Technology (ANAT)). Nevertheless it is outside the east coast axis operating between Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney and Brisbane. Locally, Darwin offered Christanto a 'unique' context as we have observed in chapter three with close connections to Indonesia. However while Darwin provided a unique blend of demographic, climatic, historic, geographic and cultural connections, at the same time there was limited critical local context for Christanto's artwork. The situation in Adelaide and Darwin can be contrasted with the status and acclaim achieved for Christanto through participation in the APT. Writing in 2000 co-founder Caroline Turner estimated that the total number of visitors was 400,000, equal to two percent of Australia’s population (Turner 2000).
The *Art and Human Rights* project at the ANU was a different context yet again. Whilst it was global in terms of the artists and invited speakers, in the wider context of the Australian art world the University represented a relatively small and select audience. Finally these local sites can be contrasted with the power wielded by major international events such as the *Venice Biennale* in 2003. For the purposes of this study my primary focus is the critical response to Christanto's solo and group exhibitions in Australia with only limited comparative reference to the international shows and their critical response. The key figures involved are the artist, writers and audiences and the critical response they generated.

The first solo exhibition to be undertaken by Christanto was in Adelaide in 1991. This exhibition entitled *Dadang Christanto: contemporary Indonesian artist* was staged at the Art Museum University of South Australia where Erica Green was director. Importantly the event was made possible with a grant from the Australia-Indonesia Institute, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, testifying to the important role of foreign affairs in providing support for contemporary Southeast Asian art.

This exhibition is crucial in Christanto's art practice as his first solo show in Australia and indeed his first solo exhibition ever. In acknowledging Green and the avant garde nature of her initiatives we need be mindful not to exaggerate a complete absence of knowledge about Southeast Asia. Academic, Brita Miklouho-Maklai is emblematic of a different position having lived in Indonesia for some time during her doctoral research. Miklouho-Maklai’s catalogue essay for Christanto's exhibition by Green provides important contextual issues for the artist's work. For Christanto to commence with a solo show at the University of South Australia was no mean feat however and reflects both the reputation Christanto had already achieved and the interest and knowledge of the gallery director. The exhibition included paintings and installations reflective of Christanto's work in Indonesia with artwork concerned with raising awareness of social environmental and political issues in Indonesia. As an example, the sculpture *Bureaucracy* featured a series of increasingly larger heads, each depicted licking the head (or helmet) of those higher in the hierarchy, parodied the concept of the Javanese proverb, "Asal bapak senang (as long as the boss is happy)".

Artist and writer Stephanie Radok is the key reviewer to provide an Indonesian political context for Christanto's work in 1991.

> On the whole Christanto's work is easily intelligible to an Australian audience even though our demons are slightly different and we must miss some of the context and meanings of his work (Radok 1991).

Alone Radok saw that Christanto was working from his own experience but that also his work had universal relevance to a wider audience.
Elsewhere, the critical response in 1991 generally located Christanto within the political and historical circumstances of Indonesia and the artist's personal life story. However it principally focused attention on the difficulties / deficiencies of cross cultural exchange.

In his response critic Peter Ward writing in the *Australian* drew attention to the gap between the average Australian's tourist experience of Bali and Christanto’s extraordinary artwork. Ward (1991 14) acknowledged that, whilst the widespread penchant of Australians holidaying in Bali engendered a degree of familiarity, 'contemporary Indonesia art does not begin and end with tourist batik on Kuta beach'. Ward's trenchant observations draw attention to the general lack of appreciation and understanding for Indonesia in general but more specifically our 'near neighbour's' rich cultural traditions and contemporary arts evident in Australian society at the time. The problem was that within Australia, recognition for Indonesia generally occurred in one of two ways, either as a tourist destination or in relation to foreign policy. Neither involved an in depth understanding and appreciation of contemporary Indonesian art.

Jennifer Dudley (1991 56) writing in *Artlink* also addressed the problems generated by the growing interaction with Indonesia and Australia and acknowledges the importance of residencies for cross cultural exchange between Indonesia and overseas artists. However Dudley also drew attention to their limitations, stating that it was simply inadequate to rely on such brief visits as the basis for in depth knowledge and understanding which, in Dudley's words, were tantamount to 'whistle-stop visits'. Indeed Dudley further reported that Indonesian artists, already well experienced in exchanges with America and Europe, questioned their 'near neighbour' Australia's absence in government facilitated cultural exchange.

Vincent Megaw (1991 16) writing in the *Adelaide Advertiser* agreed with Dudley pointing to 'continuing institutional and corporate lack of interest in cultural understanding of our nearest South-east Asian neighbours'. In summarising the critical response to Christanto's first show, it can be shown that critics primarily focused on the problems around Southeast Asian art rather than Christanto's artwork.
With the benefit of hindsight we can observe that a limited understanding coalesced with a politicised notion in Australia of the nation of Indonesia, especially during the later years of Indonesian governance in East Timor.

1993, the first Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane.

By implementing a new curatorial process the APT moved beyond the general framework of solo and survey shows in favour of collaborative exhibitions focused on a dynamic exchange with Southeast Asia. In turn this new program generated vast audiences and an extraordinary critical response. An initiative of QAG under the direction of Doug Hall and Caroline Turner, the APT evolved over a decade as a series of major events including exhibitions, conferences and publications. The APT looms large in the new recognition for contemporary Southeast Asia as its influence was and is extraordinary. Quite simply it changed the interface between Southeast Asia and Australia.

A commitment by the QAG was made to three stagings of the APT.³ Beginning in 1993, exhibitions were held on a triennial basis, with the most recent being in December 2006. The name Asia Pacific Triennial alerts us to the fact that from the outset it was intended to be more than a survey exhibition. In its aims and intent the APTs are important because as director Doug Hall argued the arena of contemporary Southeast Asian art was so complex that the APTs would have to focus on different, discrete aspects for each Triennial. In the process the APT pioneered, on a larger institutional scale than ARX, a new collaborative curatorial approach informed by postmodernism, postcolonialism and the new museology. Though evident in small to mid-sized institutions, the collaborative curatorial process was not an accepted methodology in the historically circumscribed and bureaucratically conservative state and national galleries in Australia at the time.¹⁰

Subsequently Hall (1993 6) would argue that 'the close association developed between the advisers and a range of artists, writers, curators, academics, cultural institutions and arts bodies in each country has been fundamental to the Triennial process'.

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Finally, as we shall see, with the departure of Caroline Turner from QAG to the ANU in 1997 the APT became a model for later developments such as *Art and Human Rights* at ANU.¹¹

Writing in 1993 Hall (1993 6) characterised the APT as ‘first of its kind’ and not surprisingly the APT initially encountered some difficulties.¹² Generally critics responded positively acknowledging the importance of the exhibition as an important cultural milestone (Torres 1993, Ewington 1994, McAulliffe 1994). Many saw that the APT through a series of programs and events aimed to build a critical dialogue concerning contemporary Asian art which was otherwise absent. Others took a more critical approach. Australian art historian Julie Ewington (1994 11) questioning the category of ‘Asia-Pacific' suggested that this was the fictional construct 'assembled through Australian curiosity'. By contrast Thai critic Apinan Poshyananda (1993 15) argued that the naming of a region in itself represented a political act. In projects such as the APT he argued, artists and curators are involved in mapping a region (in terms of representation: geographical, political and cultural) and their insights will necessarily be privileged over others.¹³ Chris McAulliffe (1994 102) writing for the international journal *World Art* observed that the central dilemma of audiences at the first APT was 'not my inability to grasp the intention of the artist but my near lack of knowledge of the context within which the works were produced' confirming the almost complete absence of understanding which prevailed at the time around Southeast Asian art.

In the 1993 exhibition catalogue Hall made it clear that the Triennial was not proposed as an Australian / Asian dialogue, but rather one in which Australia was a participant. Ben Genocchio art critic for the *Australian* in his review of the fourth *Shanghai Biennale* in 2003 contrasted the turnout from the world's museums at the *Shanghai Biennale* with the APT: there ‘always was something strange about Asian contemporary artists assembling in Brisbane every three years to show their wares. It felt odd at the first APT in 1993, and still feels odd . . .’. Genocchio concluded that many of the 'significant world museums' all sent groups of patrons to the fourth *Shanghai Biennale* while noting that 'Brisbane could only dream of such a turnout' (Genocchio 2003).
Indeed the APT's self-positioning and intervention was 'met with suspicion in the region' suggests Australian curator Margaret Moore (1994 12). Taken together these comments may be a sign in some art circles of a conservative and provincial response concerning Australia re-inventing itself as an Asian nation. Alternatively these criticisms might also be seen as a candid assessment of the predicament of the Triennial series, reflective, as others have observed, of an Australia trying to wish itself into an Asian consciousness. In reality Australia conceives of itself as part of Europe marginalised on the periphery of the world stage and with a diminutive population. As Prime Minister Keating (cited in Kirker 1996 32) admonished 'Australia . . . can no longer afford to be a society located with its geographical feet in Asia, but with its intellectual head and emotional heart in Europe of North America'. Such ideas of geo-political and national identity circled around the APT.

Long standing debates around foreign affairs involvement in the Southeast Asian region also dogged the critical response to the APT. The foreign affairs position was encapsulated by Neil Manton who in a reflective mode reported that "'Art suborned for political purposes" became a sort of catchcry' amongst concerned artists at the time (2000 25). However McAuliffe (1994 102) cautioned that the APT might be 'annexed to the rhetoric of foreign affairs'. To countenance this apparent 'diplomatic spin' Lynette Seear (2002 8) from the Queensland Art Gallery commented:

There have always been a lot of claims made for the APT about its value (covert or otherwise) as a diplomatic public relations exercise. But mostly those opinions and assumptions have been expressed outside of the organisation of the exhibition.

In terms of the participating artists themselves being framed by such diplomacy McAuliffe judiciously points out that within the context of such exhibitions 'artists comprehend the circumstances of their presence rather than being determined by it' (McAuliffe 1994 102).

Indigenous curator Franchesca Alberts (nee Cubillo) offered yet another perspective concerning Indigenous participation in the first APT. Alberts questioned the lack of inclusion of Indigenous artists and, given the event’s location in Queensland, especially Torres Strait Islander artists and curators.
Alberts (1994 23) challenged the organisers' proclaimed methodology of 'genuine collaboration based on mutual respect'. For Alberts this was in evidence for the 'Asia-Pacific' artists but not with regard to Australian Indigenous participation. The evidence supports Alberts' critique. Of the seventy-six artists participating in the 1993 APT, the twenty-four Southeast Asian invitees can be compared with merely four Australian Indigenous artists. As for the 'Pacific' representation, five selected artists were New Zealand based and two artists Indigenous to Papua New Guinea. Alberts' critique is very important reflecting the disparity between the increasing interest and recognition in Southeast Asian art whilst ignoring issues 'at home'. As we shall see in chapter six this debate continues to circulate around art events concerned with human rights. Alberts (1994 23), whilst championing the inclusion of artists from the Asia-Pacific region, argued that urban Indigenous art was equally political and provocative.

The inaugural APT in 1993 in which Dadang Christanto participated included a conference, catalogue, performances and artists' talks. In the first staging, seventy-six artists participated and some two-hundred artworks were exhibited. The opening event in September, 1993 at the Queensland Art Gallery Brisbane was attended by visiting artists, art historians and curators from throughout 'the region'. Four hundred and fifty delegates from the Asia-Pacific region and Australia attended the conference at QAG where thirty-eight speakers delivered papers. Countries represented in the exhibition include Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand in Southeast Asia. Representing East Asia were the nations of China, Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea, and in the South Pacific, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Australia. Clearly the APT was an ambitious program and it featured a lengthy collaborative curatorial process with local curators from each nation represented, a practice then unknown in the individual larger art institutions.

Importantly the APT drew attention to the central position of installations and performances in contemporary Southeast Asian art.
As discussed in Part One and Two, although installations and performances represented a very recent development in contemporary Australian art, in Southeast Asian art, installation and performance grew out of a grass roots cultural heritage – although this was little understood in Australia at the time. Christanto was represented by an installation *For those who have been killed…*, commissioned for the APT. This installation was displayed among other selected works by Indonesian artists Heri Dono, Nyoman Erawan, F X Harsono, Sudjana Kerton, A D Pirous, Ivan Sagito, Srihadi Soedarsono and Dede Eri Supria.

*For those who have been killed…*, was comprised of thirty-seven anthropomorphic elongated figures woven in bamboo and pierced with cane. Each figure was topped with a head-like dome. The majority of the thirty-seven pieces were suspended from the ceiling like hanging figures while others were supported from the floor by a metal frame which pierced the figures. The work was installed in front of a window. This location allowed the artwork to be illuminated with natural sunlight creating a finely-honed memorial-like quality.

The APT audience included not just white Australia but Australia's Indigenous people, Pacific Islanders and peoples from the Southeast Asian region. *For those who have been killed . . .* (1993) spoke of events in Indonesia through which it addressed universal issues of loss and suffering. Julie Ewington (1994 11) for one, commented on 'the urgent necessity for Australians to come to terms with the contemporary peculiarity of living in a White settler culture with a Black history at the edge of Asia and the South Pacific'. In Australia, its experience of these issues resonated with the three decades of Aboriginal calls for self determination, sovereignty and land rights. The growing politicisation of Aboriginal people and growing sensitivity on the part of government leaders, was intensified by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991.

Indigenous self determination holds a particular connection and countenance with Christanto's oeuvre and its urgency was particularly evident in the year 1993: coinciding with the earlier Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991 and the death of the young Aboriginal dancer Daniel Yok in an incident involving police.
Christanto's installation and performance at the APT of 1993 elicited a wider response from the local Indigenous community in Brisbane. Caroline Turner (2005 210), as co-founder of the APT, was in a position to witness the impact of Christanto’s artwork on the wider community:

By the end of the exhibition there were hundreds of flowers and poems left in front of the work. Most were not about Indonesia but, as the artist suggested commemorated suffering in every time and place. Many of the poems were about world issues and personal pain, but many were about Australia and, in particular, referred to a young Aboriginal dancer, Daniel Yok, who had died in Brisbane after an encounter with the police shortly before the exhibition opened.

It is clear from Turner’s account that Christanto's For those who have been killed..., transcended the specifics of an Indonesian experience and spoke to viewers' individual (and collective) experience, which was often connected to contemporary events in Australia. Turner provides us with a response ‘from the inside’ directly involved in selection of artists, staging of events and witness to the dramatic impact of Christanto's performance. As we shall see, the many parallels between Australian Indigenous experiences and Christanto in Indonesia would emerge with a broader public consciousness informed by not just the Royal Commission in 1991 but also the Bicentenary protests in 1988, and the Aboriginal Memorial 1988 in the collection of NGA to be discussed further in chapter six.

Stark contrasts are evident between Christanto’s participation in the first APT in 1993 and the third APT in 1999. Christanto was again an invited artist for the third APT staged in September 1999 at the QAG, Brisbane. But in the intervening six years, much had happened to politicise relationships between Australia and Indonesia. In this, his second invitation Christanto was no longer ‘representing’ Indonesia as part of the Indonesian contingent. As an outcome of curatorial shifts in the APT agenda, Christanto was participating within the broader theme 'Border Crossings'. The third APT in 1999 coincided with the humanitarian tragedy in East Timor. Following the referendum supporting independence on November 12, 1991, Indonesian military fired upon Timorese pro-Independence demonstrators in Dili. These events were widely broadcasted in the Australian media.
In the general media response and in the wider Australian public, an 'anti-Indonesia' sentiment prevailed and demonstrations supporting East Timor independence occurred in many Australian cities at that time. These sentiments resulted in a proposed, but ultimately thwarted boycott of the Indonesian artists’ participation in the APT on account of East Timor (Marianto 2000 36).

Undoubtedly the experience of a potential boycott of the Indonesian artists at the third APT must have led Christanto to reflect on his own and other’s perception of his identity, amidst the lived reality of a person engaged in ‘Border Crossing’. Because of his sense of allegiance to humanitarian causes and his longstanding criticism of the actions of the New Order, Christanto readily sympathised with the East Timorese cause. Ironically some groups in the Australian art community identified him as a representative of or an extension of the activities of the New Order regime. In response to these events Christanto (2005) observed:

Actually the protestors from the Australian art world would never have protested so loudly if they had … understood Indonesian art or the art movements in Indonesia. The participants from Indonesia in the APT III were Tisna Sanjaya, Mella Jaarsma, S. Teddy, Heri Dono, Moelyono and myself. All artists concerned with social justice. Several even have a track-record of anti-military regime work. Unavoidably, the event of the protest became a barrier in the relationship between Australian and Indonesian art. I’m sure the victims were not only the artists, but also those who for so long have worked intensively to promote visits by academics, culture lovers and art workers, both individuals and institutions from both Australia and Indonesia - visits for seminars, workshops, residency programs or study of art at universities. Their hard work and patience to teach and learn have been disturbed by political interests … noisy and loud as 'megaphones'.

Clearly the reading of Christanto’s artwork in such highly charged political circumstances together with the notional display of artworks in the APT along more narrowly conceived national lines hinders a more thoughtful reading of the artist’s work. In Api di bulan Mei 1998 (Fire in May 1998) forty-seven life-size sculptures of human figures were set alight at the exhibition opening and remained in situ for the duration of the exhibition as a blackened and charred reminder of the violence in Jakarta in 1998.
In this thesis I have argued that the lived experience of Dadang Christanto, his experience of migration and the development and reception to his work cannot be adequately understood without taking into account these global political circumstances. Christanto first observed the extent of the tragedy of East Timor on Australian television broadcasts when he was undertaking an artist in residence in Canberra in 1998. As we have see in chapter four, the artist’s Count project of 1999 was a creative response and initiated following the tragic events of the late twentieth century, a nexus of local global events such as East Timor and the war in Afghanistan, against a backdrop of jubilant millennium celebrations. Earlier in this thesis I identified a pattern of the tragic victim hindering the interpretation of Christanto’s work. In the context of local (Daniel Yok) and global political circumstances (East Timor, Afghanistan) there is a remaking of Christanto, which flips from a focus on biography, to globalising and universalising models.

2003, Witnessing to Silence, Art and Human Rights, Australian National University, Canberra.

Art and Human Rights was instigated by Caroline Turner following her arrival at the ANU from her previous position as deputy director with QAG in Brisbane. In the gap of ten years from the first APT in 1993 to the time of Art and Human Rights in 2003 a radical shift in world politics had transpired, a key outcome of this consciousness being that the west was forced to rethink its position versus 'the other'. That is that 'we' in Australia could no longer portray Indonesia as a brutal and brutalised 'other' nation. Increasingly the commentaries from this era challenge the western assumption that 'violations of rights occur somewhere else' amidst an increasingly widespread sentiment of collective guilt. It is a momentous period in global relationships in which we see ‘the west’ having to acknowledge that it too, is capable of war crimes. In Australia there is increasing awareness of recent human rights violations in relation to treatment of its first peoples and asylum seekers and questioning arises over the ethical rationalisation for the United States led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, the so-called 'war on terror', and in particular human rights violations. It was in this context Turner (2003) argued 'our research project to explore the interconnectedness between the art and human rights is all the more urgent'.
In relation to the detention of asylum seekers, Grishin (2003 49) avowed that 'We share a collective guilt if we are not prepared to speak now.' To this end, like the APT, *Art and Human Rights* looked to address new and compelling issues in relation to universalism.

*Art and Human Rights*, a three year research project at the Humanities Research Centre, ANU, featured a conference, a series of exhibitions and related public programs. It brought together scholars in many disciplines including Law, Humanities, Social Sciences and the Arts together with artists and human rights activists and representatives of Non-Government Organisations and community groups. The group of exhibitions constituting *Witnessing to Silence* occurred across three venues; Canberra Contemporary Art Space, the ANU’s Drill Hall Gallery and the Canberra School of Art Gallery in July - September, 2003.

With Turner and others coming to Canberra and importing, so to speak, the APT model, the focus on human rights can be seen in response to global events as well as a reflection of the artists' experiences, like those of Christanto's in the APT and may have impacted on curatorial decisions. Participating in the exhibitions were selected artists such as: Australian artists representing a diverse array of Indigenous and multicultural interests Juan Davila, Fiona Foley, Guan Wei, Pat Hoffie and Dadang Christanto; South African William Kentridge; from India Nalani Malani, Philippines Santiago Bose; Indonesia Mella Jaarsma and Adipurnomo; New Zealander Michael Tuffery; Belgian painter Luc Tuymans; French artist Christian Boltanski; and Chilean photographer Alfredo Jaar as well as video works by many other artists. In this way we can see that Christanto is no longer framed by his identity as a Southeast Asian artist and shown together with Indonesian peers or ‘Asian’ artists as was the case in the APT. Rather he appears in the broader context of *Art and Human Rights* project as part of a global community of artist peers addressing human rights.

In *Witnessing to Silence* Christanto was represented by the installation works *Red rain* (1998 - 2000) and *Pain of the trees* (2003); and the performance *Litsus* (2003). *Red rain*, as discussed in Part two was redisplayed in this exhibition, and *Pain of the trees*, was created during a residency at the Canberra School of Art in 2003.
Pain of the trees was comprised of multiple small white ceramic trunks with attached branches of dyed wax flowers. The advent of trees as an iconographic theme in Christanto's oeuvre emerges early in the early twenty-first century. Phillipa Kelly (2003) observed that the installation 'climb[ed] to the corner of the gallery and stand [stood] in fragile witness'. Clearly the work was created as a homage to the world's killing fields seen to be grieving for what they have silently witnessed (Christine Clark 2005 108). The performance piece Litsus was commissioned by the Humanities Research Centre, ANU for the Art and Human Rights conference and first performed at the NGA in 2003. This confrontational performance series which called upon the audience to make a victim of Christanto by throwing flour bombs at the artist and his son will be discussed in greater detail in chapter six.

Whilst the human rights agenda of the conference denoted a capacity for a certain kind of commentary to enter public debate, the publications arising from the conference point to a critical and historical juncture marking a reassessment of 'the west' position versus 'the other'. Thus there is an increasing familiarity with international issues which provided a new and more rigorous context for works by artists such as Christanto. This occurred as a result of a combination of factors: Keating government policies advocating rapprochement with Southeast Asia and the contribution the contribution of diasporic artists in Australia including Dadang Christanto, Ah Xian (b 1960), Alwin Reamillo (b 1964), Gregory Kwok Leong (b 1946) Guan Wei (b 1957), Simryn Gill (b 1959). Additionally the contribution made by the art and academic institutions to an increasing awareness of Australia's place in the region through programs such as ARX and the APT.

Conclusion

New museology set the stage in which huge, radical shifts took place worldwide in museum practice. In an Australian context new museolgy emerged in the 1990s and (as elsewhere) was seen somewhat idealistically and advanced with government support. In this chapter I recounted the critical response to Christanto over twelve years from 1991 - 2003. In that time the position of the art world in relation to Southeast Asian Art undergoes a radical shift. The analysis was focused of three key solo and group exhibitions by Christanto 1991 - 2003.
In this overview I chartered the extraordinary level of interest in Southeast Asia in the early 1990s. As we have seen the early writings Radok (1991), Ward (1991) and Megaw (1991) frequently admitted to a general lack of knowledge and absence of context for contemporary art from the Southeast Asian region. In hindsight, the Australian art world very quickly perceived themselves as experts in the area of Southeast Asia and on a par with Indonesia and international commentators. The key material cited in this analysis comes from ARX and subsequently the APT. These art world initiatives coincide with Prime Minster Keating's new policies regarding Southeast Asia. There is an 'institutional rush' as people play catch-up which is indicative of the provincialism argument with (some) artists assisted by the connection with foreign affairs. However to over emphasise this aspect is to lose historical agency for the key players including artists. I suggest that the comments of Radok, Turner and Clark (2001; 2001, 2003, 2005; 1999) and others concerning the universal aspects of Christanto's oeuvre suggest that some writers / critics were more insightful than others. At the same time, to varying degrees the response remains constrained by a Eurocentric perception about the other, art and aesthetics, the role of the artist, and political art. However alongside the continuing interest in the Southeast Asian art there are other 'blind spots' with regard to artists 'at home' which shows a selective view, excluding Asian Australian and Indigenous artists.

The renewed focus on human rights can be seen in response to global events as well as a reflection of artists' experiences, like those of Christanto's. Christanto is increasingly framed within globalising and universalising models. Universalism is further addressed in chapter six in the context of *Litsus: portrait of a family* (2003). What does an investigation of *Litsus*, the audience participation and general response reveal about the reading of Christanto's work? In chapter six I return to these claims of universalism in the context of museology and political art and test them against the evidence from the reception to Dadang Christanto.

Furthermore, as we shall see in chapter six, cultural and aesthetic forms underwent, in both idea and practice, a radical transformation over the course of the twentieth century. Christanto's redress to the world's killing fields is of particular significance here as he was working towards the notion of a counter memorial.
As intersection between public art and political memory, Christanto's artworks reflected the wider aesthetic and political revolutions, as well as the crises of representation following all of this century's major upheavals.
Plate 10
Dadang Christanto

*Litsus: portrait of a family*

15 August 2004, Canberra, Australia

Performance commissioned by the Humanities Research Centre, Australian National University for the Art and Human Rights conference

Photographer unknown
CHAPTER SIX

Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined the response to Christanto and his art work within a broader historical, political, cultural and social context. My analysis demonstrated both the new insights and growing appreciation for Christanto’s work but also the tensions and misunderstandings that inform this cross cultural exchange. In this chapter I focus in depth on a single artwork, the performance piece *Litsus: portrait of a family* (2003) (Plate 10) at the NGA in conjunction with the *Art and Human Rights* conference, ANU.

In this chapter an individual performance work is discussed in relation to broader issues regarding the counter memorial, memory and history and the idea of memorialisation. Crucial to my discussion will be complicated and contested notions of the individual versus the universal because it underpins my hypothesis concerning the meaning of Christanto’s work. Considered to be a period of social and cultural transition, postmodernism is discernible by the shift from a dominant point of view to a plurality of perspectives. A reassessment of ideas challenges the absolute, universal and central, to make way for particulars which defend the local and embrace the marginal. Following on from this is a fresh appreciation of personal, individual memories and alternative, once peripheral, viewpoints of history.

Operating at the same time however, and complicating the radical shift in the critical response to Christanto, is the problematic relationship between politics and art in western art traditions. The origins of this debate can be traced back to a Kantian aesthetic of the eighteenth century and the notion that great works of art must uplift the audience and generate a transcendental spiritual effect. With international modernism and emergence of New York as the centre of the art world, the writing of Clement Greenberg gave renewed energy and importance to these debates. Greenberg (1961) privileged form over content, espousing that the astute viewer will respond to the more transcendental aesthetic or formal ‘universal’ qualities - rather than what the work 'says,' making the broader socio political context of the artist of lesser consequence.
In a contemporary postmodern era these debates are now called into question. Worldwide Indigenous and non-western ethnic minorities are engaged in processes of cultural revival and the writing of history itself has undergone radical shift from former celebratory narratives of national identity to a plurality of minority histories. Postmodern practice cannot but be political, concerned with political critique, hidden histories, personal experience and will therefore be very different in style, content and technique. The critical and institutional response to Christanto’s artwork is located within such contemporary art and museological debates concerning the character and interpretation of ‘political art' and representation.

In this chapter I focus in particular on the agenda of the counter memorial and its questioning of access and representation. Meanings ascribed to artworks are made and remade in the process of cultural production and it is my hypothesis that Christanto’s work, once seen as political protest, is better understood as counter memorial. Whereas Christanto's early performances and installations in the 1990s were viewed as political protests, a decade later, by the turn of the twenty first century, the Indonesian critic and curator Hendro Wiyanto (2002) uses the term ‘counter memorial’ to evoke this aspect of Christanto’s work. Wiyanto's insights reflects the post New Order context in Indonesia which has better enabled a reassessment of the events of 1965 and 1966 allowing a great deal of research at both the institutional and individual level to reflect upon these events from various perspectives. At the same time I argue that the idea of the counter memorial must be seen in a broader political, cultural and historical context. The idea of the counter memorial is also a reflection of institutional response to the changing mood generated in part by international events.

Hence this study raises many questions. What form does the counter memorial follow and to what extent is it dependent on globalising cultural production - or as cognitive linguists have pointed out - on who controls the metaphors (Lakoff 2006). What are the particular circumstances addressed by Litsus in relation to violent events in Indonesian history? What does this investigation of the reception to Litsus, and the audience participation in the work reveal about the changing interpretation of Christanto's work? Increasingly Christanto’s works speak to viewers' individual (and collective) experience.
Both Christanto and the art world are influenced by wider international events as local relationships are overtaken by a succession of major international events providing agency for his work to be seen in a wider context. In answer to these questions chapter six locates Christanto's oeuvre within broader contemporary art and museology debates concerning the agenda of the counter memorial and its questioning of access and representation.

The Counter Memorial

In order to pursue this discussion further I turn now to the idea of the counter memorial. The counter memorial characterises an exploration in the late twentieth century of a more complex and contested role of the monument. It emerged in direct response to contemporary world events and the changing nature of historical enquiry and is a key aspect of the new museology. As Young (2000) points out, 'the monument, like other cultural and aesthetic forms underwent in both idea and practice a radical transformation. In the profound intersection between public art and political memory, which came to the fore in the aftermath of World War Two, the collapse of communism, postcolonialism etc the monument reflected the aesthetic and political revolutions, as well as the wider crises of representation'. Young is arguing that all monuments reflect both socio-historical and aesthetic context but in recent years the monument has been transformed from the heroic, self-aggrandising celebratory figurative icons of the late nineteenth century - supportive of national ideals and triumphs - to explore a more complex and contested role embodying an anti-heroic, often ironic and self-effacing stance. Aesthetically, figurative bronze was replaced with conceptual installations marking the national ambivalence and uncertainty of late twentieth century post-modernism and its radical shift in content.

In reality the monument as both institution and concept had come under attack in the twentieth century. The idea of the monument was denounced as early as the nineteenth century by Friederich Nietzsche in his questioning of monumental history.19 'The notion of a modern monument is veritably a contradiction in terms,' Lewis Mumford (1938 434 quoted in Young 2000) wrote in the 1930s. Mumford went on to suggest that traditionally, it seemed to have been the least effectual of regimes that chose to compensate for their paucity of achievement in self-aggrandizing stone and mortar.
He wrote, 'Stone gives a false sense of continuity, a deceptive assurance of life' (Mumford 1938 434 quoted in Young 2000). By its very nature the counter memorial embodies a radical new aim and intent reflected in the approach to content. More recently German historian, Martin Broszat further suggests that the traditional monuments may not recall events, but rather bury them beneath layers of national myths and explanation. In this view, monuments reduce or, in Broszat's (1990 129 quoted in Young 2003) words, 'coarsen' historical understanding as much as they generate it. By contrast, my hypothesis for understanding Christanto’s oeuvre argues that Christanto has moved together with this trajectory in historicity and in the changing museological response. Over the period of this decade the idea of the counter memorial has emerged in a great many international contexts to address the terror and violence generated by governments: the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C, United States (1988); the Aboriginal Memorial in Australia (1988); Wat Mai, the Killing Field Memorial, Siem Reap, Cambodia (c1992); and the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, Germany (2005) to name a few of the many possible examples. What I am exploring here, is the degree to which institutions have shifted ground to create a space for the new kinds of 'monuments' being produced internationally.

*Litsus: an encounter with notions of violence, universalism, and the counter memorial*

I turn now to a detailed consideration of Dadang Christanto's performance *Litsus* commissioned by the Humanities Research Centre, Australia National University for the *Art and Human Rights* conference in 2003 and an analysis of the work in relation to ideas of the counter memorial. *Litsus* was first performed at the NGA in 2003. Thereafter *Litsus* was performed on several occasions. The *Litsus* performance series was subsequently staged at a number of venues: *Future Tense; Security and Human rights* exhibition at the Queensland College of Art in September 2005; a video documentation of *Litsus* shown at *Contemporary Territory 2004: Four artists the territory years*, at MAGNT, Darwin, 21 - February - 3 May 2004 and *Text Me: an exploration of Body Language*, Sherman Galleries Sydney 20 Jan - 5 February 2005.20 As discussed, performance art by its very nature, takes a new form at each presentation. Unlike Indonesia where performance is widely understood as part of a cultural context, here in Australia this is not the case making context crucially important for the meaning of the artwork.
First staged at the entrance to the NGA, *Litsus* was a confrontational thought provoking performance. In the performance Christanto and his son Gunung sat impassively eyes downcast with their backs against the NGA gallery wall, with their legs crossed dressed in basic black clothing. The Gallery’s high, brutal, rough cast concrete walls rendered the figures frail and insignificant. The modernist architecture provided a somewhat bleak environment augmented by the Canberra’s August winter weather. Signage demarcated the performance area. A publicised event, *Litsus* attracted a broad audience including *Art and Human Rights* conference delegates as well as the occasional passer-by as they made their way to or from the gallery.

In front of Christanto and Gunung the audience saw a pile of tapioca flour ‘bombs’ wrapped in paper and tied with a string. Located near the entrance, father and son sat impassively, eyes downcast, behind the mound of prepared tapioca flour bombs. NGA Curator of Asian Art Robyn Maxwell introduced the performance with a short statement inviting the audience to participate by picking up the tapioca bombs and throwing them at Christanto and his son. When Maxwell encouraged audience members to throw the flour bombs at the 'victims' Christanto and his son remained mute and passive.

The physical distance between the audience as antagonist and performer as victim was limited to several metres. The duration of the performance was determined by how slowly or swiftly the audience responded and lasted approximately fifteen minutes. Initially I had the sense that the audience appeared unwilling to engage in this symbolic act of violence and deliberately aimed above the heads of Christanto and his sons, showering the pair in a white, powder spray.

As discussed, all performances are different because they take place in different contexts and time frames and each audience is unique. As with any other group, the *Litsus* audiences participated in the performance in a unique way which could not be replicated by another group (or generation) time or place. But as Turner pointed out, in the process of participating in the performance the audience was made 'complicit' (Turner 2005) in that they were required to stand by and participate in or witness others engaged in a symbolic act of violence.
Indeed the flour bombs hitting the wall made a percussion-like noise sounding frighteningly like gun shot, and in so doing created shifts in crowd participation. If at first the group seemed hesitant, over the period of the performance however the mood changed and the audience became confident reflecting a range of emotions whether hilarity, amusement, or fear. The pace of the flour bomb throwing was lively proceeding at a steady pace. No single person stood out as being particularly aggressive, that is, throwing more than others, simply their 'fair share', aiming directly and more forcefully at the target. At the conclusion of the flour bombs Christanto rose, brushed himself and his son down, acknowledged the crowd and in silence, walked away from the performance area. The performance was followed by a quiet clapping but the tone was not congratulatory.

Clearly the performance elicited a range of responses: while some onlookers chose not to get involved, others were energetic in their participation. Conceivably the range of responses, elicited by the performance both physical and reflective, may be seen to reflect differences within the audience, between the more informed audience provided by the Art and Human Rights conference and members of the wider public visiting the NGA. The video footage reveals that the NGA audience for Litsus predominantly comprised a younger generation in their late 20s to 30s - a demographic in general terms identified as 'generation x'. There are many different ways in which their response to Litsus can be interpreted; perhaps it was their first experience of performance hence they were less reticent to participate. Artists use the tools available to them to ensure the work is powerful and evocative for the audience. In this way we can observe, in keeping with much of Christanto’s artwork, that the materials used in his performances and installations are highly symbolic. Litsus was no different. As shown in previous chapters, a great many of Christanto's performances involved the covering of the artist’s body in symbolic materials. Terracotta clay was commonly used by Christanto to adorn his body suggestive of themes such as earth / labour / ritual / death and the universal human form. Tapioca was chosen by Christanto because it is a basic subsistence food that is commonly associated with the poor in Indonesia. Essentially a flavorless ingredient produced from treated and dried cassava (manioc) root tapioca, it is often used in cooking, when food is scarce. Thus the materials used by Christanto were highly symbolic as a carrier of meaning.
In addition the title given to this performance 'Litsus' carried political meaning for Christanto. *Litsus* is Indonesian short form for 'Penelitian Khusus' or 'special investigation'. *Litsus* refers to the procedures invoked by President Suharto, in 1990 whereby applicants seeking employment in the army, public service and certain other specified professions were subject to mandatory background screening. Christanto employs *Litsus* to refer to the discriminatory practices in which candidates underwent mandatory screening for their adherence to Indonesia's state philosophy, *Pancasila* and to determine if they or their relatives were ‘tainted’ by earlier political affiliations in 1965 and 1966.\(^{21}\) In this way critics of the New Order authoritarian government continue to be excluded from positions of influence.\(^{22}\) Such discrimination continues into the contemporary era marking entire families as ‘dirty’ - in their performance the powder residue marks Christanto and his son.

The inclusion of Dadang Christanto’s son, Gunung Tan Aren in the performance thus adds another layer of symbolism to the work. Christanto himself was eight years old when his own father 'disappeared' in 1965. In 2003, Gunung Tan Aren was the same age. However his youthful presence in the performance was open to misinterpretation. Probably most members of the audience at *Litsus* were unaware of this connection. As such it might have been confusing or abhorrent to witness a young child subjected to the abusive behaviour. However for those members of the audience who were informed about Christanto’s life history, Gunung Tan Aren's presence, whilst disturbing, conveyed a powerful and compelling message. His presence conveyed the notion that the violence of 1965 continued resolutely and was transmitted across families and from one generation to another. Like the tapioca powder itself, violence could have a residual affect: touching not only the direct victims but generations of families.

While these interpretations relied upon inside knowledge of Christanto’s personal life and detailed knowledge of Indonesia politics, *Litsus* was also open to broader, more universal interpretations.
In the performance *Litsus* tapioca flour bombs were thrown by the audience at the performers. The flour from the exploded bombs enveloped artist and his son. Christanto and his son was were thereby transformed into 'universal' figures.

Through their participation in the performance *Litsus* compelled the audience to victimise others, in this way the performances can be seen to address the idea of violence. As such the performance created the potential for new insights that violence is universal but how it is experienced is specific to individuals located in particular contexts, so the work expands our understanding of violence. Therefore Christanto’s work was viewed in universal terms at all levels of audience response from the broader public to informed commentators. Thus *Litsus* references Christanto's own personal experience of tragedy and violence and discrimination but it also resonates universally to address the issues of violence and injustice. For Robyn Maxwell the *Litsus* performance referenced 'widespread violence associated with identification of difference in political, religious, cultural and social beliefs' (Maxwell 2004 32).

Whereas Christanto's early performances and installations in the 1990s were initially viewed as political protest, a decade later by the turn of the twenty first century the Indonesian critic Hendro Wiyanto (2002) used the term ‘counter memorial’ to evoke this aspect of Christanto’s work. At the same time I would argue that the idea of the counter memorial must be seen in a broader political cultural and historical context. The idea of counter memorial is a reflection of the art world response to the changing mood generated in part by international events.

Indeed, in exhibitions worldwide Christanto's creative voice is often said to transcend the specifics of an Indonesian experience and speaks to viewers' individual (and collective) sense of loss and suffering (Christine Clark 1999, Turner 2005, Maxwell 2003 and Wiyanto 2002). As we saw in Christanto's first exhibition in Australia gallery director Erica Green, writer Brita Miklouho-Maklai and critic Stephanie Radok saw the universal elements immediately in Christanto's artwork. As Radok (1991) observed:
On the whole Christanto's work is easily intelligible to an Australian audience even though our demons are slightly different and we must miss some of the context and meanings of his work.

Such perceptive observations confirm that the reception to Christanto's work was not held captive to stereotypes around notions of the other. Earlier in chapter five it was shown that local audiences at the first APT read Christanto’s work as a memorial drawing parallels between his experiences in Indonesia and death of Daniel Yok in Brisbane. Similarly in Fukuoka in Japan in 1992 where For those who give evidence was displayed, according to Christanto a common response (Christanto in interview by Gray, November 30 2003) of the audience was concern for forgiveness for atrocities perpetrated by Japanese military in World War Two. Furthermore these accounts enable us to understand how an art work may resonate with a very broad audience, that is, it speaks on universal terms. This is crucial to my hypothesis, as it explains Christanto’s significance. For those who have been killed and Litsus reference Christanto's own familial experience of discrimination but also addresses 'universal' themes of injustice. In this way, Christanto is attempting to recover hidden histories of violence, cultural politics of identity for ethnic minorities, diasporic communities, and current debates on memory and history.

In earlier works such as 1001 Earth humans (1996) and For those who have been killed (1993) formal qualities echo those of monuments through their formal regimented rows of figures that suggest military order. In Litsus Christanto approached from a very different angle. Christanto’s use of culturally specific, ephemeral materials challenges notions of permanency that can be observed in more authoritarian monuments in stone above and beyond prestigious materials such as marble and bronze. Initially ephemeral materials such as low-fired clay are adopted by Christanto to mark out a space in which to challenge these more permanent, state sanctioned trajectories. In such works absence becomes more important than presence and impermanence becomes more important than permanence (Wiyanto 2002 31). In Litsus tapioca - provisions for the common person - is adopted. I argue that this gesture can be symbolically read as a rejection of the monument exalting fixed histories. In turn Christanto brings forward the notion of the counter monument which may offer comfort for victims of tragic national events.
How do we account for the various meanings elicited by the work: we may ourselves be victims, we may know Christanto's life history, or we may be unaware and may not experience such tragic events?

If the audience does not need to know the autobiographical connection that the work may hold for an artist, it follows that they do not need to understand the precise details of his tragic life circumstance for it to have resonance. As Turner (2005 124) has observed 'His [Christanto's] art is not to be confined to any specific ideology or locality; as is demonstrated again and again by the fact that it resonates with viewers who have no notion of any political content or background'. These insights enable us to understand how Christanto utilises the tools available to him as an artist to elicit from the audience a critical engagement with the notion of violence. In Christanto’s performance *Litsus* violence is represented not as a given, bounded idea that is pre-determined, pure or complete, but rather as a concept with uncertain beginnings and endings, a continuum that requires ongoing inquiry and re-assessment. This aspect is brought to bear most evidently by each individual’s witnessing of or participation in the *Litsus* performance.

Art museums and galleries were a key element in the crises of representation of the late twentieth century. Evident since the 1970s art historians and curators sought to challenge the grand narrative of art history. Australian art historian Terry Smith (2006) testifies to the variety of methods that constitute the 'new art history' - feminist, Marxist, psychoanalytic, structuralist, poststructuralist and deconstructive, then postcolonial - were energetically applied to break apart the inherited, imposed framework and to supply rich, alternative explanations. Within postmodernity artwork itself has come to be seen in new ways as a place of contact, providing new and different alternatives to the usual channels of news, information, impressions and interpretations and experiences (Dwyer 2006 97). Most particularly Australian art historian Jill Bennett (2005 10) in her book *Empathic vision: affect, trauma and contemporary art* suggests that art may make a unique contribution to our understanding of subjects such as trauma and violence that entails an encounter with something that is irreducible and different, often inaccessible.
In theorising the affect that political artworks like *Litsus* have in the contemporary world the idea of the ‘encountered sign’ as posited by Gillies Deleuze is crucial. In contrast to previous definitions of art, Deleuze argued that art is better seen not as an impression, illustrating or embodying a subject. Rather he asserts its capacity, through affect or emotion, as means of engendering critical thinking (Williams 2003). In a related hypothesis on trauma in art Jill Bennett (2005 3) employs Deleuze’s idea of the ‘encountered sign’ to argue that the way in which art addresses trauma need not be seen as a ‘faithful translation of a testimony’. Rather it calls upon art to exploit its own unique capacity to contribute to critical thinking. Bennett maintains that:

To identify any art as about trauma and conflict potentially opens up new readings, but it also reduces the work to a singular defining subject matter in a fashion that is often anathema to artists who construe the operations of their work as exceeding any single signifying function (Bennett 2005 3).

In this way we can see that a limited reading of Christanto's work focussed on his biography as a 'faithful testimony' of his personal trauma denies a more complex reading intended by Christanto in which his own individual experience is a catalyst engendering critical thinking as a 'forum' that could include a plurality of voices. For Christanto the objective of the performance *Litsus* was a heightening of a collective consciousness regarding the power of the masses in the enactment of brutality and the dynamics of the crowd in humiliating others. The issues raised by Christanto’s work may potentially contribute to contemporary research in this area pertaining to an understanding of contested memory and histories. Why do people engage in government endorsed political acts of violence, why are they silent and how are they complicit? At the heart of *Litsus* was a desire by the artist to unravel collective complicity in remaining silent to 'state' or other forms of violence. As such it relates to broader issues concerning violence and memory as a porous concept with an uncertain beginning and end. In another view, as landscape design theorist Sue-Anne Ware (2006 171) sees it, 'if we begin to think of memory not as some platonic ideal that is pure or complete, but as a periodic process of re-evaluation and reconstruction given present contexts, do our ideas about designing memorials then evolve accordingly?' These ideas suggest Christanto's work addresses audiences on issues of violence and the political events of the past in order to actively promote the process of memory capacity to sustain memory.
In this way his work can be seen to make an exceptional contribution to understanding on repercussions of violence. Or as Jill Bennett (2005 10) has put it, 'art [that] may make a unique contribute to an understanding of subjects such as trauma and violence that entails an encounter with something that is irreducible and different'. In this process Christanto extrapolates from his own individual experience at the local level to engage globally with a universal experience of violence and terror.

Christanto's particular contribution to the counter memorial is that his work is not just a gallery construction - paralleling to the creative work of Indigenous and non western artists. Yet it was within national and global political circumstances that the artwork of Christanto was created and interpreted. John Barrett-Lennard (1993 6) amongst others, has observed that artists play a central role in the creation and understanding of culture. In participating in projects in Australia, Christanto was commonly called upon to engage in a diplomatic role. Radok’s (1991) comments are imperative, returning to her review of Christanto's solo exhibition in 1991:

Christanto is mainly concerned with giving a voice to the poor of Indonesia, specifically in a critique of economic development which is frequently "development without dialogue" or "uneven development" largely benefiting the rich and treading on the rights of the rest. The same thing happens all over the world so what we see in Christanto's exhibition is a familiar and universal story but appear here in relation to Indonesia now.

Since the time Radok made these trenchant comments in 1991, radical global shifts have taken place. What happens in Indonesia where museums are linked to the authoritarian Indonesian government and commercial enterprises? 23For Indonesia's inaugural President Sukarno, images and evidence of centralism in Jakarta was a requisite condition of the nation state (Leclerc 1993 55). In an earlier era the most striking example is the MONAS (national monument) built over fourteen years (1961 -1975) and intended as a metaphor for the benefit of international and domestic audiences of the country’s newly won independence. A marble obelisk at the geographical centre of the Jakarta, it towers at one hundred and thirty meters high and is topped with thirty-five kilograms of pure gold leaf to symbolise the eternal flame of freedom.
More recently many governments have acknowledged the changing nature of historical enquiry and turned away from such self-aggrandising celebratory, nationalistic monument making. The strategies of the counter memorial accords with the artist's own viewing position:

History has always celebrated the loftiness and heroism of its leaders and their war generals. However history's other participants (rarely mentioned in the historical record) include private citizens, or common people, who were forced to become involved in an historical process which they may not have supported. Today's era of which I am an observer, people call the age of "development". We can see the numerous "monuments" intended to commemorate its success. Can it be said that its development is linear in the same way as is the historical record of the ruling elite? Has it not resulted in making victims of the common people? (Christanto unpublished artist's statement 1993).

In this way we can see that Christanto is creating work that recovers hidden histories of violence that challenges official versions of the tragic events. The selection of Christanto for the *Venice Biennale* in 1993 contrasts with earlier ambitions in monument making in which a significant tactic of the Indonesian government affords acknowledgement that it does identify with what is happening in the wider world. Here Christanto's place is acknowledged within the context of these transformative events. In the Indonesian Pavilion, the curatorial premise of *Mourning of the world: paradise lost* addressed the recent events of the bombings in Bali in 2002 and 2005. Yet despite Wiyanto’s personal insights, the general lifting of restrictions, the fall of the New Order regime in 1998 and Dadang Christanto’s selection for *Venice Biennale* in 2003 there remains limited possibilities of an official counter memorial - that responsibility lies with the individual artist.

**The Aboriginal Memorial: a parallel development**

In an Australian context the Aboriginal Memorial offers an early example of political protest art, a counter memorial and evidence of the way in which curatorial practices in Australian museums modified their collections and displays to accommodate this changing political climate. Of course such a project was not possible in an earlier era and arose from the Bicentennial protests in 1988.

The Aboriginal Memorial is an installation of 200 log coffins, now displayed at NGA.
The idea for the Aboriginal Memorial was initiated by Djon Mundine then art adviser at Ramingining in Central Arnhem Land. The project was conceived as a memorial for those Aboriginal people killed in the history of colonial conflict and buried without the appropriate mortuary ceremonies. The memorial was created by artists in Ramingining Central Arnhem Land for the purpose that it be located in a public space where it could be preserved to demonstrate the resilience and vitality of their culture for current and future generations. As a public installation it invited the public to reflect upon and share in the celebration of their cultures' endurance at the time of the Bicentenary of Australia celebrations. The path through the installation mirrors the course of the Gylde River through the Arafura Swamp in Central and Eastern Arnhem Land. The hollow log coffins are situated broadly according to where the artists' clans live and the differing painting styles reflect the artists' clan groupings where they live along the river and its tributaries. The tallest of the logs is approximately three meters in height and the designs are the same as those painted on the human body. The hollow logs can be understood to represent deceased persons: such hollow logs are made for burial ceremonies or to store the bones of the deceased persons.

In this way we can see that the Aboriginal Memorial acts as metonym for the missing, and reminds us of the relationships (and obligations) between the dead and the living. In my view the installation goes further to challenge audiences as to what can and cannot be counted as evidence: the assumption that all monuments need not be cast in bronze or rendered in stone. The Aboriginal Memorial originally seen as part of the Sydney Biennale 1988 was subsequently purchased by NGA - reflecting just how far policies on collection and display of Indigenous art have moved since 1982, when, by comparison, very little Aboriginal art was seen at the opening of the NGA.

Suvendrini Perera (2004 unpaginated) suggests ' . . .the pathways that Indigenous people across Australia have opened for the rest of us to think about evidence, accountability of the present of the past and the responsibility of the living to those who have died'. In Perera's comments we see alternate histories offering new insights and new methodologies.
With the gains of the new museology, the Aboriginal Memorial at the NGA in 1988 ran in tandem with a broader social context of the Stolen Generations’ enquiry and calls for Indigenous self determination. The Aboriginal Memorial stands as a local example of the counter memorial in relation to contested histories. As such it provides a key illustration of an artwork comparable to Christanto's practice in its expression of the darker moments of a nation's history which retain a more reflexive response.

In this discussion I have drawn parallels with the Aboriginal Memorial and the artwork of Dadang Christanto. There are differences: one is an artwork by an individual artist, the other, a collaborative artwork and both occurred at different times. The catalyst for the Aboriginal Memorial was the Bicentenary in 1998 whereas Litsus transpires five years later. Litsus emerges within drastically different conditions of conservative governance under Prime Minister Howard in which revisionist histories prevail through conservative leadership. It is in this context and that the work of Christanto and Art and Human Rights can be characterised as radical and subversive. Rising dissatisfaction with polices concerning social, cultural and economic issues creates academic agency constructing the environment in which Christanto's work Litsus is commissioned, that is, Art and Human Rights (ANU) and the later Future Tense: Security and Human Rights at Griffith University (2005). A further question arises, though its further ramifications are beyond the scope of this thesis: to what degree do large scale counter memorials require democratic consensus? Were major public protests off limits in Australia by 2003 and to what degree are they allowed in Indonesia? The portrayal of Christanto’s oeuvre as a movement towards counter monument is explicated by these historical aspects.

Conclusion
As we have seen in this section the critical response to Litsus is driven by the radical shifts then taking place in museums. If we evaluate in more depth, as I have done, the complexities of the new museology and counter memorial we can see its strategies accord with the artist's own viewing position. At heart Litsus was a desire by the artist to unravel collective complicity in remaining silent to 'state' or other forms of violence.
In this way we can see that a limited reading of Christanto's work focussed on his biography as a 'faithful testimony' of his personal trauma denied the more complex reading intended by Christanto. For Christanto his own individual experience is a catalyst creating critical thinking as a 'forum' that could include a plurality of voices. Readings have continued to fall into the trap of the myth of the artist as tragic hero. But there are exceptions: there are writers and curators who have sustained more self-reflective accounts and move towards more nuanced readings in which the counter memorial emerges as crucial in providing a more complex understanding. Indonesian curator and writer Hendro Wiyanto is responsive to the local catalyst in Christanto's work and conceives the term ‘counter memorial’ to evoke this aspect of Christanto’s work. At the same time I have argued that the idea of the counter memorial must be seen in a broader political, cultural and historical context. The idea of the counter memorial is a reflection of institutional responses to the changing mood generated in part by international events. In an Australian context the Aboriginal Memorial is an early example of political protest art, a counter memorial and evidence of the way in which curatorial practices in Australian museums modified their collections and displays to accommodate this changing political climate. As such it provides a key illustration of an artwork comparable to Christanto in its expression of the darker moments of a nation's history to retain a more reflexive response.

1 Van Mensch (1995) charts the nomenclature of 'new museology' finding that the term was first introduced in the United States when the concept of the museum as educational institution was brought to life again. The second emphasis was at the end of the 1970s when in France the social role of museums was a re-defined by a new generation of progressive museologists. Finally, toward the end of the 1980s the term appeared in the United Kingdom in connection with a re-assessment of the educational and social role of museums in the post-war period. In Australia it came most prominently into the public domain with the debates concerning the focus and content of the newly built National Museum in Canberra in the 1990. It was in this context that Christanto emerged on the Australian art scene.

2 For confirmation of this argument, that is, that there is evidence of ongoing relationship with Southeast Asia see Neil Manton in Cultural relations: the other side of the diplomatic coin (2003).

3 Terry Flew (2002) characterises Keating's views as highly popular with the tertiary-educated middle class but failing to capture the aspirations of rural and outer-suburban voters (Flew 2002). According to ALP speech writer Don Watson observes that the agenda exemplified the contradictory qualities that marred Keating’s leadership: a moral imperative and a political death trap (Watson quoted in Flew 2002).

4 According to Don Watson (2002) in his book Reflections of a bleeding heart: a portrait of Paul Keating PM, Keating gained the approval of President Suharto and Keating saw this as a domestic vote winner. However Watson goes further to suggest that Keating was misguided and did not reflect the viewpoint of the Australian people stating that Keating ’... had been on the APEC [Asia Pacific Economic Committee] circuit too long, and not in the [Australian] shopping malls or on the buses’ (Watson quoted in Flew 2002). In Watson's comments it is possible to perceive the deepening chasm.
between the Keating's government's reform agenda and the attitude of the wider public popular agenda.

5 Keating's polices were not without its problems in the Southeast Asian region. The veteran Malaysian leader Dr Mahathir often railed against Australia (and New Zealand) from entering the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). Indicative of the quandaries confronting Australia, Dr Mahathir commonly admonished that Australia is not an Asian nation and in reaction to Australia's desire to join ASEAN Mahathir stated 'Once you become Asian, we will think about that' (Mahathir quoted in Pedersen 2002). Mahathir's provocations point to the historic privileging of Australia's European heritage.

6 On the 16 November 2007 the Australian Government, Department of Defence released the findings of the NSW Coronial Inquest into the death in 1975 of Brian Peter (one of the Balibo Five) Widespread speculation prevailed that Government agencies in Australia had forewarning the journalist were to be killed. However the inquest found, like that of five previous inquiries, that 'all of the evidence . . . was to the contrary' (Department of Defence 2007).

7 An accompanying lecture series was undertaken by Christanto in Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney in 1991.

8 For further discussion on comparative works see chapter two for a discussion of Kekerasan (1995).

9 Whilst a commitment to three exhibitions was made by QAG from the outset, it went on to stage additional exhibitions in 2002 and 2006.

10 Zeplin (1999 237) goes further to suggest that 'the role of institutions - universities, private galleries and to a lesser extent, art museums - has contributed to an increasingly entangled web (frequently unacknowledged) practices and affiliations in the region. From a trickle in the 1980s, these sectors have witnessed a more thoroughgoing on a particular region.

11 The ANU directly benefited from consequences of 1997 when Turner, Clark and Margo Neale left QAG and accepted positions at ANU.

12 Indeed QAG subsequently acknowledge this lack of context and made a commitment that future stagings of the APT would meet the need for detailed, culturally specific exhibitions, each focused more thoroughly on a particular region.


14 Sydney and Melbourne are the established 'centres' of the Australian art world. Whilst Brisbane can be characterised a newer 'upstart' and as such the APT was perceived as making a play to render it a contender and put Brisbane more seriously on the map so to speak.

15 Several nations were establishing initiatives for intra and inter Southeast Asian art dialogue. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in 1955 by artists and political figures. This imitative was subsequently commemorated in Indonesia in seminars and exhibitions in 1995 including Contemporary Art of the Non-Aligned Countries. For contemporary activity in relation to artists run spaces see discussion by Hou Hanru 2003 Time for Alternatives and also Christine Clark 2005 in Art and Social Change.

16 In a discussion on ARX in 1993 Barrett-Lennard notes that in the past ARX has responded well to criticisms of content and direction and. . . that in the next ARX may include increased Aboriginal participation (1993 6).

17 Increasing ambivalence / racism is evident under the leadership of Prime Minster Howard in which revisionist histories prevail through conservative leadership.

18 Christanto in an artist statement of 2003 reveals 'The tree is used in my work to represent the "suffering forest". For me the forest in Java and Bali is a witness when that area became a place of slaughter in 1965. . . . If the forest can explain the stories under General Suharto regime, as witness or give evidence, when people are suffering and dying surround the tree. I believe the tree only drop tears. . . Until now the tree can only tell about the painful suffering of their life. They only crying and crying when I ask them about 1965. . . This work acts as a reminder that not only people can cry. Of course the tree saw people kill each other. I want to say, very important that everywhere, every place have witness of the suffering from the violence. The efforts for reconciliation become urgent for healing, not only for people or nation, but also for nature, for the tree in Java and Bali'.

19 Away with the monuments! Nietzsche declared in his blistering attack on a nineteenth century German historicism that oppressed the living with stultified versions of the past, what Nietzsche called 'monumental history' (Nietzsche 1985 14 quoted in Young 2000).

20 This project, sponsored by Queensland College of Art, Griffith University and the Humanities Research Centre at the Australian National University was initiated and supported by the Research Council Asia Pacific Futures Research Network under its 2005 theme of Towards a secure future in
It forms part of an ARC funded research project on art and human rights entitled *The Limits of Tolerance in 21st Century*.

21 In this way all former political prisoners from the 1965-67 as well as suspected communists or leftists sympathisers from the period continue to be formally prohibited from teaching in any public school or university as well as for a wide range of professions (Human Rights Watch 1998). The prohibition extends to children and grandchildren, in-laws and nephews and nieces. Prisoners were often held without due process and imprisoned for years without ever being tried and found guilty of wrong doing. In addition the screening is vague and unevenly implemented and thus the threat of being named continues to poison social and intellectual life in Indonesia.

22 Such discriminatory practices extended to the marking of national identity cards as suspected PKI (Communist Party Indonesia) members.

23 In Indonesia the early 1990s were largely influenced by the Presidential elections held in 1993. At the time there was intense speculation as to whether President Suharto would run for a sixth consecutive term. President Suharto appeared to endorse moves towards greater openness and democracy. The new openness resulted in a marked reduction in the arrests of alleged subversives and in the closures of newspapers. However the new atmosphere also fostered increased debate on a number of issues which were increasingly difficult for the government to contain.

24 Christanto’s artwork paradoxically addresses the earlier events of 1965 and 1966. The concept for the memorial was initiated by Djon Mundine after viewing John Pilger’s documentary *The Secret Country* (1990). In his documentary Pilger says (paraphrased in National Gallery of Australia). Indeed, in land strewn with cenotaphs which honour the memory of Australian servicemen who have died in almost every corner of the earth, not one stands for those [first Australians] who fought and fell in defence of their own country.

25 Returning to Mumford’s comments (1938 434 quoted in Young 2000) such materials gives a false sense of continuity, a deceptive assurance of life’.

26 Angela Philp’s (2007) observes ‘At the [NGA] opening, the chronological Australian art display included a few examples of Aboriginal art, although at this stage they were shown more for historical or comparative interest, such as locating an Aboriginal work next to a Margaret Preston painting to indicate its influence on her work’.

27 The building of the new National Museum of Australia opened in March 2001 (the Australian Federal Government’s intervention and attempts at content and display censorship) and the ANZAC parades of the early twenty-first century (endeavours in memorialising and nationalism) both in the national capital of Canberra are two fascinating sites for further investigation elsewhere.
CONCLUSION

The focus of my thesis is Dadang Christanto, one of the world’s best known contemporary Indonesian artists. Dadang Christanto has gained national and international recognition as an Indonesian / Australian artist working in the area of performance and installation. But there is a sense in which omissions and misunderstandings continue to circulate around the artist allowing essentialising and mythologised representations to prevail governed by the western paradigms of the tragic heroic genius and exotic other within the Australian critical response. The outcome has been a failure to engage in depth with the aim and intent of Dadang Christanto's work and restricted critical analysis. In my thesis I have addressed these issues and sought to contribute knowledge and understanding by providing a more complex picture.

The dissertation began by identifying that the gaps and misunderstandings that circulate around Dadang Christanto occur at three critical junctures: the failure to examine the artist's lived experience and formative years in Indonesia; the limited analysis of Christanto's migrant experience and its influence on his art practice; and the limitations evident in the critical and institutional response to the artist's work.

In the first section of this thesis I examined the political social and cultural context for Dadang Christanto's childhood and his early developments as an artist in Indonesia. In so doing I have encountered notions of contested memories both individual and collective. Christanto embodies a hybridised position or as Indigenous writer Nyoongah Mudrooroo (1990 24) has phrased it a 'contestational weave of cultures'. My research revealed that Christanto, as a Chinese Indonesian living with racism and oppression forged both a hybrid identity and a hybridised belief system: a synthesis of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism with a Javanese mysticism. Homi Bhabha (1990) in his concept of the Third Space recognises that the importance of such a hybridised location of culture but he also acknowledges that a position of hybridity involves both loss and gain.
I have demonstrated Christanto views himself at all times an outsider, since childhood in Indonesia through to adulthood in Australia.

Once embedded as childhood experiences, Christanto's formative memories have remained with him and continue influencing his world view and art making. Such a world view can be clearly observed in earlier works such as *Kererasan I* (1995) discussed in chapter two. A shared vision of humanity can be observed in Christanto's oeuvre, a commemorative quality that is critical of the devaluing of humanity to economic values. His artworks convey this philosophy at the same time as recuperating value for the victims of state sanctioned violence. As I have shown an important and influential figure for Christanto was Romo Mangunwijaya through his social advocacy for Indonesian villagers. In chapter one my research revealed how Christanto, like the Jesuit priest, asserts historical agency for poor and marginalised peoples. Christanto questions the stereotype of the tragic victim and is engaged in the effort to recuperate a 'history from below'. Dadang Christanto represents the rural and urban poor within the militaristic power relations of the New Order regime. This can be observed in the artist's perceptive use of an archaic iconography in *Kererasan I* where the poor and marginalised figures, though politically and economically weak are portrayed, as Christanto (quoted in Wiyanto 2002 48) has put it, strong 'like statues of Buddha'.

In this way my investigation of Christanto's oeuvre has provided many insights into existing problems and created new trajectories for future research. If the post New Order (1966 - 1988) context in Indonesia has enabled intensified research, at both an institutional and individual level, in the reassessment of the events of 1965 and 1966 we need to understand the impact and outcome of this revisionist historicising. Christanto is one of several creative artists such as artist Tisna Sanjaya (b1958) and writer Ribka Tjiptaning in *Aku Bangga Jadi Anak PKI* (2002) who have in recent years declared personal family members as victims of the 1965 and 1966 violence. The impact of these events is realised in Christanto's performance and installations through the artist's deliberate use of organic materials and an expectation of participation from the audience.
From the very outset of his art career Christanto uses materials such as clay slip and terracotta with great sensitivity retrieving a mute sense of dignity for the over exploited materials (within a context of rapid modernisation in Indonesia). This can be seen in low fired earthenware of the *Kekerasan* (1995) series through to the tapioca flour of the *Litsus* (2003) performance. In *Litsus* the artist and his son are rendered soiled by the tapioca flour. This visual metaphor recounts a governmental view in which they have been tainted through familial association with victims of the 1965 killings across generations. This raises the further question as to what extent does the state endorsed characterisation of family members of alleged communist sympathisers as unclean, draw upon Javanese cultural beliefs? Here we can follow with the findings of researchers such as Richard Robinson (1981) and Franz Magnis-Suseno (1999) whose research demonstrates the way in which Javanese cosmology was appropriated to articulate the political authority of the Indonesian state during the rule of the New Order.

In understanding Christanto's earliest artworks and art performances my research began to illuminate cultural differences between Indonesia and Australia. In Indonesia performance art grows out of longstanding cultural traditions and though radical and subversive is situated quite differently to the avant garde in a western tradition. In the west, performance art emerged from a radical avant garde. While it took many forms all questioned the limitations of the art object framed within academic traditions and its commoditisation and institutionalisation. Furthermore within modernity the relationship between art and politics was problematic determined by a Kantian aesthetic predicated on the assumption that the work of art must uplift the audience and generate a transcendent spiritual effect. Paradoxically, in Indonesia, the politicisation of art practice (and indeed cultural activism) was a well understood phenomenon realised through traditional art forms of theatre and performance which operate at the level of everyday life. In Indonesia this influence is acknowledged by visual artists, theorists, cultural commentators and the broader public alike. Hence cultural activism has longstanding traditions which are appreciated by contemporary Indonesian artist / performers and their audience / participants.
Part Two addressed the second critical juncture around which misunderstandings circulate. In my research I drew upon diasporic theory as a means by which to recuperate value for the artist, and arrive at a more nuanced understanding of the intercultural. Contemporary diasporic literature has moved beyond an archetypal model of diaspora which drives the misunderstanding of Christanto's migration. That is, whilst acknowledging the experience of displacement, which as Farah Wardani (2005 12) has put it, 'intrigues [Christanto] as a foreigner in a foreign land' the artist's motivations were primarily economic and professional. Furthermore diaspora exposes the relation between personal life stories and the politics of cultural identity. In the thesis Christanto claims agency for the experience of migration - cast by the artist himself as essentially positive. In so doing my research on Dadang Christanto opens out many trajectories for future research. There is a need for comparative studies which consider the experiences of Dadang Christanto alongside those of other Indonesian artists and writers who have migrated such as artist Semsar Siahaan who settled in Canada in 1999.

As I demonstrated in chapter four, thematic and stylistic shifts in the artist's oeuvre were affected by the experience of migration. In relation to questions of diaspora Dean Chan (2000) questions the evocation of recovered and recoverable 'Chineseness'. Such writings help us to recuperate more complex readings of Christanto's migration and its influence on his art making. The propensity to essentialise Christanto is compounded in an Australian context where plural identities within the population had been usurped by historically privileged Australian homogenous, Anglo Saxon identity. Or as Ien Ang (2003) has put it, cultural difference is portrayed as threatening despite 'the fact that it is everywhere'. Contested identities are crucial to understanding Christanto's appropriation of, in the artist's words, 'Chinese ethnic icon[s]' in works such as Red rain. In this way we can move beyond a totalising and essentialising reading of both artist and artwork.

The artworks discussed in chapter four were both begun in 1999, the year of Christanto's migration, and both were created over a period of years and share common visual elements.
As we have seen in the analysis of *Red rain* (1998 - 2000) and *Count project* (1999 - 2004), his works moved beyond the specific historical, political and cultural events of his childhood in Indonesia and towards more universal human experiences. Increasingly Christanto is concerned with communicating experiences of loss and grief. *Red rain* in particular as a personal prayer to his father (Wiyanto 2004 50) was driven by the artist's personal history, though the artwork was generally read by audiences outside of this context. In turn these developments in Christanto’s work raised new questions of interpretation.

If the audience does not need not know the autobiographical connection the work may hold for an artist, it follows that, they do not need to understand the precise details of his tragic life circumstance for it to have resonance. These insights enable us to understand how Christanto utilises the tools available to him as an artist to elicit from the audience a critical engagement with the notion of violence. Likewise, the intention of the *Count project* is to literally make each person count. In his own words, Christanto's (quoted in Higson 2003 15) project is 'still counting and still remembering'. Increasingly then, Christanto’s work is seen to be not specific to Indonesia but rather it addresses more universal issues of social justice and contested histories and over time and in various contexts his works are seen to generate multiple meanings.

In section three my analysis demonstrates the way in which cross cultural relations between Indonesia and Australia created both new insights and growing appreciation for Christanto's work and at the same time tensions and misunderstandings. James Bennett's (1996) idea of 'institutional rush' is a key component of my argument because the phrase creates a space for dialogue concerning the persistent romanticising and mythologising of Christanto. Crucial to my discussion of Christanto are the contested and complicated notions of the individual and the universal because it underpins my hypothesis concerning the meaning of Christanto’s work. That is, its transformation from cultural activism to counter memorial.
As I have shown, through the personal, cultural and political experiences of his youth, Christanto gained insight into the differences between official histories (which memorialise those in power) and the more complex and contested histories from below. Personal and collective memories are required to formulate coherent identities: or as Benedict Anderson (1983, 1991) postulated 'imagined communities'. But such histories and memories are always contested. Christanto asks through his artwork, what versions of the past are evoked and moreover who is entitled to speak for the past in the future? In this way we can follow Christanto's concern with historical agency. In his art practice the creative space becomes a forum with the potential for social change. Jill Bennett (2005 10) suggests 'art may make a unique contribution to an understanding of trauma and violence that entails an encounter with something that is irreducible and different, often inaccessible'. Bennett's insight leads to a more nuanced understanding of Christanto's oeuvre. Most particularly it leads to an understanding of the ways in which the centrality of the audience is crucial to Christanto's philosophy of performance art. In quoting Christanto's own words, I have shown that the artist does not conceive performance art like theatrical performances with the actors separated from the paying audience by the proscenium arch (Viktor Turner 1987), nor displayed like an artwork, separate from an audience. As with the relational aesthetics as articulated by French theorist Nicolas Bourriaud (2002), the audience is envisaged by Christanto as a community. The artwork is proposed not simply as an encounter between viewer and object in the space of the individual but rather where meaning is elaborated collectively.

In my thesis I demonstrated that the art world response cannot be considered in isolation, it must be located in a wider political historical and cultural context. In part the initial response to Christanto in Australia was informed by an idealised multiculturalism and new political and cultural engagement with Southeast Asia. However apart from foreign affairs and scholars, few Australians understood the recent events in Indonesian history and Australia’s shift from embracing multiculturalism under Prime Minister Keating (1991 - 1996) to a return to increasing ambivalence under the conservative government of Prime Minister Howard (1996 - 2007).
This radical shift in Australian politics combines with international events such as the terrorist attacks of the early twentieth-first century to renew a focus on art and human rights. A key consciousness of radical shifts in global relationships transpires such that the west is forced to rethink its position regarding the east. Amidst a widespread sentiment of collective guilt, increasingly the assumption unravels that violations of rights occur elsewhere. The idea of new museology and the counter memorial is a reflection of institutional response to the changing mood generated in part by international events. The new museology argued for a new, more pluralistic approach on behalf of cultural and collecting institutions where meanings are open ended and more engaged with the community in contrast with earlier monolithic modes and approaches. An important strategy of the new museology in the Australian context was the incorporation of Australia within the wider geographical Asia-Pacific region. ARX and the APT were undoubtedly the foremost initiatives of the strategy. In my analysis I demonstrated dramatic shifts in collection and display of institutions encompassed within the new museology creating a critical and curatorial space in which meanings for Christanto and his work could occur.

These critical shifts in museological practice in Australia occurred simultaneously with the arrival of Christanto on the scene. As with much of Christanto's oeuvre works such as *For those who have been killed* (1993) and *Litsus* (2003) reference Christanto's familial experiences of discrimination. At the same time they are concerned with universal themes of injustice. Whereas Christanto's early performances and installations of the 1990s were viewed as political protests, by the turn of the century Hendro Wiyanto (2002) used the term counter memorial to evoke this aspect of Christanto's work. While the idea of the counter memorial is an indication of the art world and museological responses to the changing mood generated in part by international events, Wiyanto's commentary is reflective of Indonesian critics' more perceptive understanding of Christanto’s work in relation to Indonesia’s hidden histories.

The question is whether new museology has actually recreated museums or do they remain bureaucratically entangled with the nation state and open to political pressure to represent the national imaginaries?
My analysis of the new museology and counter memorial in relation to the key performance work *Litsus* created parallels with the Aboriginal memorial.

In an Australian context the Aboriginal memorial (1988) is a powerful early example of a counter memorial and evidence of the way in which curatorial practices in Australian museums modified their collections and displays to accommodate a changing political climate. In my thesis these productive changes were contrasted with the situation in Indonesia with the building of MONAS and Christanto's inclusion at the *Venice Biennale*.

In my research I have shown that the art world cannot be considered in isolation. Both Dadang Christanto and the critical response he generates must be located in a wider political historical and cultural context and that the far-reaching global events and terrorist attacks of the early twenty-first century renew a focus on art and human rights. Most particularly in the period examined within this thesis a key consciousness of radical shifts in global relationships transpires such that the west is forced to rethink its position regarding the east, having to acknowledge that it too is guilty of war crimes. In turn this created an increasing familiarity with international issues and a new and more rigorous context for works by artists such as Christanto. In my analysis I demonstrated dramatic shifts in collection and display of institutions encompassed within the new museology creating a critical and curatorial space in which meanings for Christanto and his work could occur. In the process we can see that through the complexities of the new museology and the idea of the counter memorial the art world and its ideologies moved much closer to the artist's own viewing position. Following Christanto' initial redress to the world's killing fields he encountered contested history. Through the intersection of public art and political memory, he arrived at the concept of the counter memorial.
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