

Art Radar

Contemporary art trends and news from Asia and beyond

Geometry and repetition: Indonesian ceramic artist Albert Yonathan Setyawan in Singapore

Posted on 08/05/2015



Like

Share

2

G+1 0

Tweet

1 Vote

For Albert Yonathan Setyawan, repetition does not fill a characterless void but instead endows a space with cosmological force.

In his ongoing solo exhibition "APOTHEOSE", running at Singapore's Mizuma Gallery until 17 May 2015, Setyawan, a young Indonesian artist from Bandung, presents two new mandala installations and several other works. The exhibition includes drawings and prints where the spiritual is symbolic, and the symbolic in repetition becomes spiritual.



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, 'Nature's Scintilla', 2014, ceramic, 100 x 100 x 5 cm.

Image courtesy the artist and Mizuma Gallery.

Albert Yonathan Setyawan's distinct style seems to pay tribute to the enduring traditions of Buddhism and Hinduism, practised in his native Indonesia – where he completed his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at the Bandung Institute of Technology – and in Kyoto, Japan, where he is pursuing doctoral-level Ceramic Arts Studies at Kyoto Seika University.



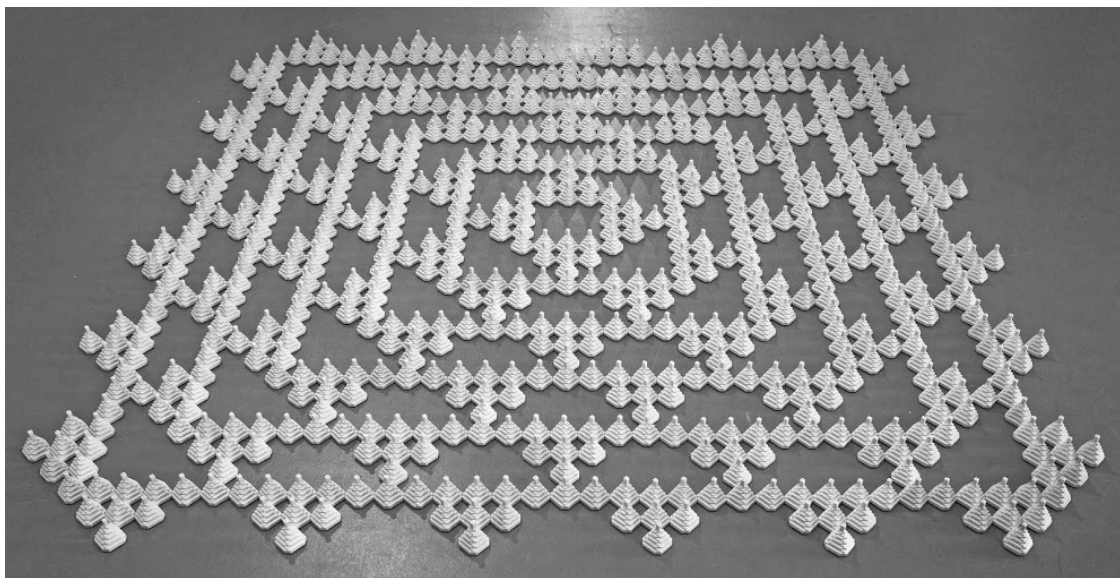
According to Freddy Chandra at **Mizuma Gallery**, Setyawan's work is not a gaze toward religions born in antiquity; rather, it is a portal to contemporary spirituality, one that can **"transform something ordinary into something considered divine"**. His art-making is about "finding spiritual awareness outside the boundaries of institutional religion".



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, 'Mandala Study #4', 2015, terracotta, marble sand, dimensions variable. Image courtesy the artist and Mizuma Gallery.

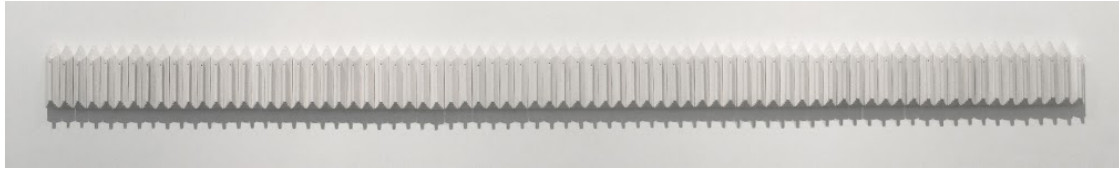
Inside the labyrinth

Setyawan's structures are designed like orderly mazes and are named in honour of the 'mandala' that represents the universe and serves as a medium of spiritual guidance for religious practitioners in the Buddhist and Hindu traditions.



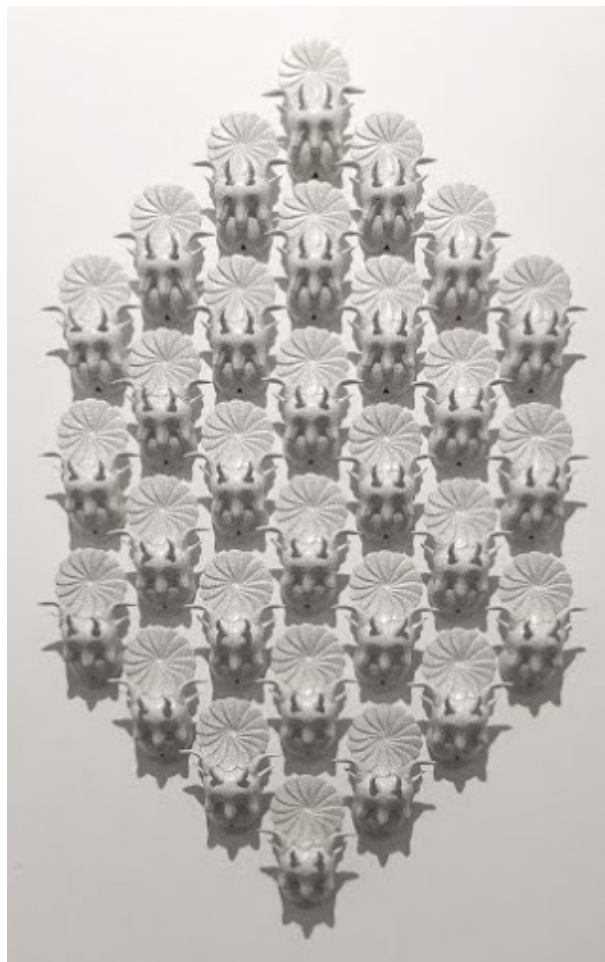
Albert Yonathan Setyawan, 'Mandala Study #3', 2015, ceramic, 300 x 300 x 7 cm. Image courtesy the author.

Mandala Study #3, a large-scale work that is the focus of the ongoing exhibit, is arranged in a square: an allusion to a mandala – a square with four gates. The work, however, is dotted with symmetrically placed ceramic pieces that resemble stupas, or symbolic Buddhist monuments found in South and Southeast Asia.

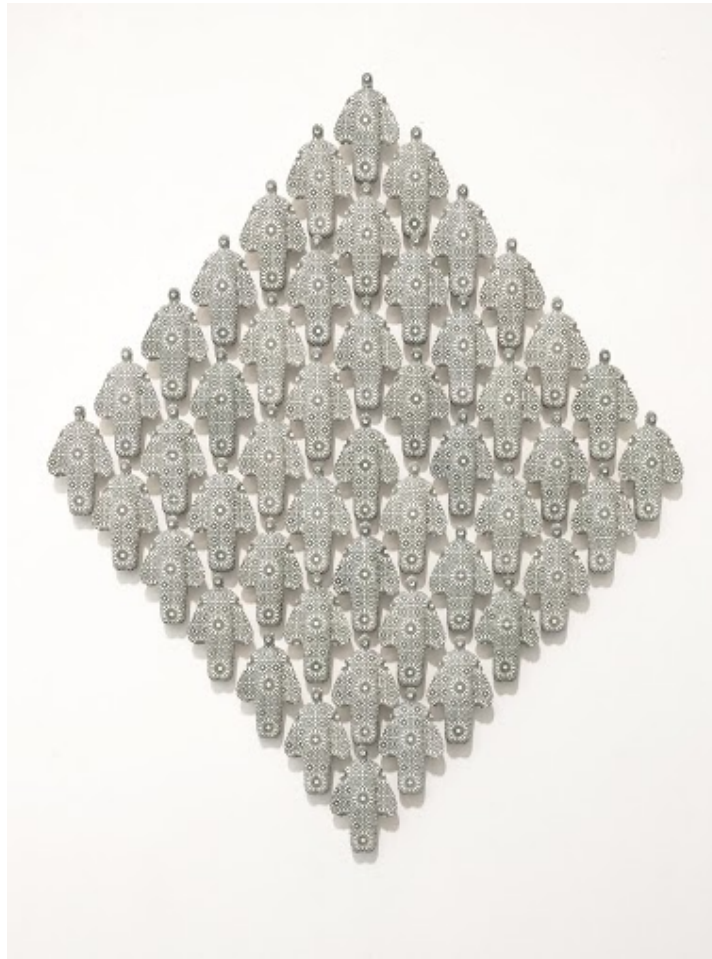


Albert Yonathan Setyawan, 'Unknown Sanctuary', 2014, ceramic, 360 x 21 x 6 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Mizuma Gallery.

Inside any labyrinthine structure, a viewer is inclined to feel lost. But the pointed ceramic pieces in Setyawan's *Mandala Study #3* give the impression of a constellation of objects that bear semblance to the stars – guiding the uninitiated into the cosmological realm.



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, 'Demigods', 2014, ceramic, 80 x 50 x 8 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Mizuma Gallery.



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, 'Incandescence', 2014, ceramic, decals, 65 x 95 x 3.5 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Mizuma Gallery.

Complications are simplified

Repetitions form a pattern in Setyawan's work. In geometric and symmetric arrangements, animals, plants and symbolic objects become atomic units of a coherent whole. The artist has selected his subjects carefully; butterflies, the petals of orchids or hummingbird wings effortlessly draw attention to nature's simplicity. As Chandra writes, "all of the objects were made in a simplified manner and [are] relatively small in size."



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, 'When The Sparrow Died', 2014, pencil on paper, 67 x 50 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Mizuma Gallery.

In Setyawan's *When The Sparrow Died*, a pencil drawing on paper, solemn orchids form an arch over a sparrow that, at first glance, appears perched over its reflection, but upon closer look is pausing over another bird identical in size. With the orchid formation and the bird pausing to reflect death, the balance of symmetry conveys the peace that comes with that balance.



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, 'Double Specter', 2014, pencil, ink, gouache and gold paint on paper, 48 x 63 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Mizuma Gallery.

In the secular setting of the Mizuma Gallery, the symbols serve to channel the affective spiritual labour commonly found in the repetitive recitation of a mantra: an act that the devout engages in to achieve the highest point, or 'apotheose', from which the exhibition takes its name.



Albert Yonathan Setyawan, 'Mystic flowers', 2014, ceramic, 150 x 105 x 3.5 cm. Image courtesy the artist and Mizuma Gallery.

Setyawan's exhibition in Singapore is not his first, nor is it likely to be his last. He has participated in group exhibitions in Indonesia, Thailand, Italy and Japan, and represented Indonesia at the **55th Venice Biennale**.

Elizabeth Shim

724

Related Topics: **Indonesian artists, emerging artists, ceramics, drawing, art as meditation, Buddhist art, events in Singapore**

Related Posts:

- **ART|JOG|14: Redefining democracy in Indonesia and contemporary art – in pictures** – June 2014 – Indonesia's pivotal, artist-led annual fair ART|JOG returns in June 2014 with an ambitious message of democracy
- **Re-exploring the urban environment: Indonesian artists at Jakarta Biennale 2013 – picture feast** – November 2013 – the 15th Jakarta Biennale takes a special look at Indonesian street artists
- **"Sip!" Three generations of Indonesian Art in Singapore – picture feast** – September 2013 – the travelling exhibition at ARNDT Singapore features 16 artists spanning three generations
- **What is Indonesian contemporary art? Inside Indonesia** – August 2013 – Sydney researcher Adrian Vickers breaks down the trends that define contemporary Indonesian art
- **FX Harsono and the art of political protest – Para Site Hong Kong artist talk** – April 2013 – Indonesian installation artist FX Harsono discusses political protest and why he will never stop searching for himself

Subscribe to *Art Radar* **for more on Indonesian artists**

Posted in **Art as meditation, Ceramics, Drawing, Emerging artists, Indonesian, Singapore** Tagged **55th Venice Biennale, Albert Yonathan Setyawan, Elizabeth Shim, Freddy Chandra, Mizuma Gallery**

permalink [<http://artradarjournal.com/2015/05/08/geometry-and-repetition-indonesian-ceramic-artist-albert-yonathan-setyawan-in-singapore/>]