



DADANG CHRISTANTO



LITSUS
AUGUST 15 2004

Performance by Dadang Christanto, Tukgunung Tan Aren (R) and Kilau Setanggi Timur (L), Humanities Research Centre, The Australian National University



SEARCHING DISPLACES BONES
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Dadang Christanto is a leading Indonesian artist, with a considerable international reputation, who has been living in Australia since 1999. He was born in 1957 in Tegal, Central Java, and studied painting in the 1970s in Yogyakarta, graduating from the Indonesian Institute of Arts (ISI). A painter who also is known for his performance works, sculpture and installation art on themes of human rights, peace and social justice he has exhibited in many exhibitions, including in Australia, Brazil, Cuba, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Canada and the United States, and continues to exhibit in Indonesia. Major exhibitions include the First and Third Asia-Pacific Triennials (1993 and 1999), the Havana Biennale (1994), 'Traditions/Tensions', Asia Society Gallery, New York (1996), 'Art in Southeast Asia 1997: Glimpses into the Future', Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo, the XXIV Biennial de Sao Paulo, Brazil (1999), and the Gwangju Biennale, Korea (2000). He has also been a lecturer at the University of the Northern Territory and the University of NSW.

Dadang Christanto's art is characterised by a deep empathy for human suffering and all victims of injustice. He was represented in the 2003 'Art and Human Rights' exhibition at ANU with a major installation, 'Red Rain', incorporating 1,965 small drawings of heads and related to the killings in Indonesia in 1965 when his own father disappeared. This work is now in the Collection of the National Gallery of Australia which, in addition, commissioned a bronze sculpture 'Heads from the North', made during a residency at the ANU. The Art Gallery of New South Wales purchased Dadang's great

sculptural installation 'They give evidence' in 2003 for the opening of its new Asian Gallery. This installation represents figures of the dead who have returned to bear witness to the wrongs inflicted on them and on others. Collectively they invite us to seek a future in which there will be no more such victims. In 'Litsus', which will be performed as part of this exhibition, the audience must either stand by or participate in the violence. In the second part of this performance, seen on video in this exhibition, 'Searching displaces bones' we see a wrapped body carried, slowly unwrapped and subjected to forensic examination by a young girl, who may represent the next generation of victims. These two performances encapsulate the essence of Dadang Christanto's art, of which he has said: 'I want to initiate communication that liberates...Liberation from the burden of history filled with wastelands of blood and tears

(Dadang Christanto, 'Beyond the Future, : Catalogue of the Third Asia-Pacific Triennial', Queensland Art Gallery, 1999, p. 200.)