

PIPELINE

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PROFILE



Untitled by Leo Allenda. Handmade umbrella, sound, gold plated needles, dynamo, D155 cm. Courtesy Cemeti Art House.

KINETIC AWARENESS OF OLD AND NEW

Interview with Leo Allenda,
by Cristina Sanchez K.

Bandung-based Leonardiansyah Allenda (Leo, b.1984) works conceptually, creating sculptures and installations that integrate spatial and cultural considerations through hybrids aesthetics relying on traditions, collective and personal myths, and contemporary behavioural values that are seemingly new to Indonesian society. Allenda grew up looking at blueprints, since all of his family are either contractors

or architects, and for his 2011 residency at Cemeti Art House in Jogja (Yogyakarta) he researched the very particular planning of the city: those imaginary lines that run from the sea - realm of Ratu Kidul, the Queen of the South Sea - to the mountain, home to the diety of the Merapi volcano, Sapu Jagat. "Two great natural powers, rich with natural resources, but also big risks of natural disasters," says Allenda, adding that not surprisingly the philosophy of balance is a significant point in the traditional culture of Jogja.

Part of a system of cosmic concepts, the lines define the central position of the Kraton (Sultan Palace) as a manifestation of a symmetrical, sacred centre. "I was really interested in the im-

part of the symmetrical plan. In the old times they believed that north is closer to the upper space of the earth so it is the usual location of priests and scholars. All of the universities are built in the north on higher ground, close to the mountain. It has malls, shopping centres and cinemas: facilities of a more urban lifestyle, similar to Jakarta; that is opposite to the south, which is more traditional. That mixture really becomes part of the identity of Jogja, constructing the general form of the city - it doesn't happen the same way in other places in Indonesia. Here, meeting between tradition and global culture is mixed in a raw way. Like mixing something together without a filter," says Allenda.

He sees myth as the only practical tool left for the tradition and the Kraton's system of customs to retain some power. In *Untitled* (2011) he recreates an imaginary space reminiscent of a carousel, using a rotating umbrella, symbol of the King's protection. Dozens of golden needles, traditionally used in shamanic practice to transmit magic into people's bodies, hang from under the umbrella. "It is also a formal consideration. It works as a blinking mechanism reflecting light, enhancing my effort to create an imaginary space," says Allenda, whose works are to be experienced more than looked at. One feels a tangible change of atmosphere upon entering their space; both a radical and playful experience. "It is also my perspective towards mythology," he explains, a way to infantilise adults.

Time/Balance (2011) is a site-specific installation placed in the centre of the *limasan*, the traditional Javanese house built without nails and according to the proportions of its owner. "The house is an extension of the human body. I believe it is a concept, but in Javanese culture it is quite literal," says Allenda, explaining that measurements are counted in footsteps (*Depa*). A plumb-bob and a footprint projection are placed at the centre of the four traditional

pillars, and both keep moving around "as if searching to balance each other," he says of the interactive installation between a physical pendulum and a virtual footprint, "the more people come around it, the bigger the circle of the rotating pendulum."

Allenda assumes himself as a modern person, who is evolving in a changing culture, questioning the role of tradition, its exotic decorative characteristics and its society-binding values. "Its position is still negotiating with all kind of Javanese existence. Essentially it's a search for balance between humans and the space they live in", he concludes.



The Time, The Balance by Leo Allenda, Video animation, plumb bob, cotton thread, dynamo, variable dimensions. Courtesy Cemeti Art House.