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WORLD WORD:

IMAGINING THE LOST, NARRATING THE SILENT

Solo Exhibition by S. Urubingwaru



21 November - 22 December



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IMAGINING THE LOST, NARRATING THE SILENT

Suliswanto Urubingwaru — known simply as Urubingwaru, though I call him Sulis — was my student in the Fine Arts Department at the Faculty of Visual Arts, ISI (Indonesian Institute of Arts) Yogyakarta. Sulis is an artist, researcher, and writer whose practice weaves visual art and literature into narrative. Working across drawing, painting, installation, and interactive installation, he utilises fiction and interprets it to examine history, myth, and identity.

Sulis recently completed the Fine Arts Program at the Faculty of Visual Arts, ISI Yogyakarta. His solo exhibition, titled "As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap, Camerado," was held at ch+ch in Seoul, South Korea (2026). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including ARTJOG: Amalan (2025), where he received the Young Artist Award; "Pulse" at Haridas Contemporary, Singapore (2024); "Fugitive Shadows" at Ace House Collective, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2024); "Lost in Whimsy Wisdom: Interplay of Realities" at ISA Art Gallery x Omah Budoyo, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (2024); and "Like a Crowd of Extras" at Seven Sisters Gallery, Houston, USA (2024).

I have long been preoccupied with how a story comes into being, lodges itself in memory, and acquires new meaning as it passes through another consciousness. Perhaps this is the condition of human existence itself: inextricably bound to narrative. We reconstruct the past through memory, interpret the present through the weight of experience, and orient ourselves toward the future through hope and its fixed uncertainties. No event stands alone; each is held within a dense web of memory, emotion, loss, and longing. Through these entanglements, we come to know ourselves and, in turn, the world.

It is from this vantage point that I approach Sulis's practice. His investment in stories is not, at its core, a question of delivery, but of something more fundamental: how human beings construct meaning from their own lives. Through a sustained narrative inquiry that bridges the visual arts and literature, Sulis moves continuously across fiction, history, myth, and identity. In his hands, a story is never merely a vehicle for representation; it is a mode of exploration, a means of prising open experience to release the meanings buried within.

At the center of this exhibition at ara contemporary lies a question that I take to be the animating force of Sulis's practice: how does one's personal experience evolve into a private mythology? His relationship with storytelling begins early, with the tales his father would tell him at night. Sulis's relationship with the spoken word deepened through his adolescence through studying wayang kulit (shadow puppetry). This encounter brought him into contact with a new cast of characters — among them animal figures of stylized, deliberately deformed form — whose strangeness opened onto other ways of seeing. Reading and history further developed his intrigue in stories, though it is not history as an official, sanctioned record that piques his interest most. Sulis is drawn to what lies beneath or beside that record: what he calls "silent histories," accounts erased, displaced, or suppressed under the pressures of politics, religion, or the sheer precarity of survival.

This orientation toward the silenced and the lost has led him, gradually, into melancholy. In Freud's account, melancholy arises from the loss of a person or object of deep significance. This loss need not be concrete; it can attach itself to abstractions as well: a homeland, freedom, an aspiration, or an ideology. For Sulis, this grief is inseparable from the fading of local traditions, as inherited values slowly erode from the very communities that once carried them. At the same time, he feels a constant restlessness at the deliberate eradication of historical events in Indonesia and beyond, a violence perpetrated in the name of political interest.

This restlessness is evident in the human figures moving through his paintings, always solitary, contemplative, and suspended in inquiry. They are, in a sense, a reflection of the artist himself, an individual who refuses to take the dominant narrative at face value. For Sulis, no narrative is neutral; each is a construction, shaped and disseminated in ways that may serve power rather than truth.

Against these figures stand others drawn from myth: embodiments of the Other (Sang Liyan). Through them, Sulis attempts to reestablish the presence of those cast to the margins of the prevailing story, opening a space where forgotten voices, memories, and experiences might once again assert their existence.

As his imagination materializes on the canvas, another question arises: what allows one's personal experience to reach into the lives of others? To me, the most intimate encounters carry within them themes that exceed the individual, such as love, death, loss, fear, betrayal, and hope. We may not have lived through the same events, yet we can identify the emotions that resonate with our own. At this threshold, a story begins to exceed its maker.

I am reminded of mythological traditions and folklore from across the world — from Greek mythology to Javanese folklore. Both are evidence of the same impulse: the human need to comprehend experiences that reason alone cannot explain. Mythology is not merely an artifact of the past; it is a living instrument through which we approach our fears, our losses, and all the many ways life can take us.

In Sulis's practice, fiction is neither a rejection of the real nor an escape from it; it is, rather, a way to approach reality indirectly, to see it differently. Experience is processed, morphed, integrated into imagination, and from this approach, a new interpretation emerges. The result is something he calls a "personal mythology," not merely an autobiography. It refers to a transformation in which memory is curated, events are reread, and emotion takes new form through works.

Something shifts when this personal mythology enters the public realm. The work begins to detach from its creator as it encounters the memories and selfhood of those who encounter it. In this way, a viewer need not possess the work's full context to find resonance; the work's intention can already be found at this stage.

The universality of art, in this sense, has nothing to do with similarity in experience. It lies in its capacity to find a common ground amongst differences. The singularity of one's experience generates the conditions for encounter, creating space for mutual recognition rather than separation.

Sulis's attachment to storytelling is rooted in memories of his father, who would recount tales to him in childhood. Stories are not only entertainment; they also become a medium for closeness, warmth, and belonging that helps a relationship thrive. Therefore, stories are not supplements to experience, but they become essential to how one comes to inhabit the world.

In Suliswanto Urubingwaru's practice, art presents itself as a ground where the self and the world meet, where the singular opens onto the collective. The intimate becomes a site of conversation; the particular leads towards a question larger than itself. If stories have any ultimate power, it may lie not in the answers they offer but in what they ask of us: to remain open to the lives of others and to discover, beneath the apparent singularity of our experiences, the possibility of a connection.

Yogyakarta, October 2026
Bambang 'Toko' Witjaksono
(Curator, Artist, and Lecturer at the Faculty of Visual Arts and Design, ISI Yogyakarta)



A rebellious man, 2026
oil on canvas
150 x 110 cm



Get smart (two indonesian communist guys talking about nuclear energy & rocket science), 2026
oil on canvas
150 x 110 cm



Garden of the ballerines hotel, 2026
oil on canvas
150 x 197 cm



Tropical malady, 2026
oil on canvas
160 x 110 cm



Eternal forest, 2026
oil on canvas
150 x 250 cm



Ascending the Modern World: a manual, 2026
oil on canvas
60 x 50 cm



A Scanner Darkly, 2026
oil on canvas
100 x 60 cm



My mother's love abandoned me, so stay with me
Phallus!, 2026
oil on canvas
66 x 87.5 cm



Manhattan mephistopheles, 2026
oil on canvas
109.5 x 78 cm



The private life of a cat, 2026
oil on canvas
109.5 x 84.5 cm



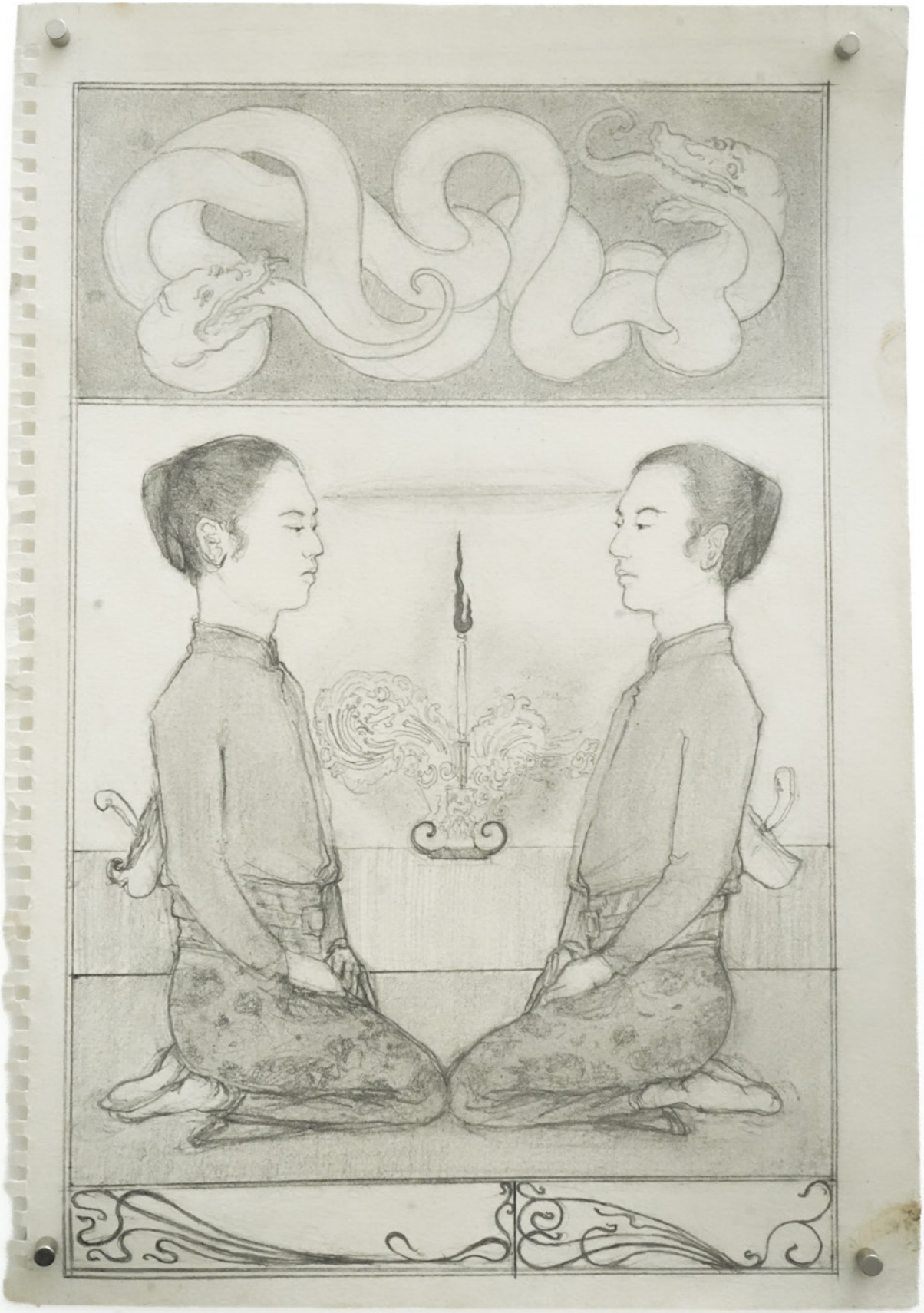
Do cat have dreams, mr.herzog?, 2026
oil on canvas
90 x 80 cm



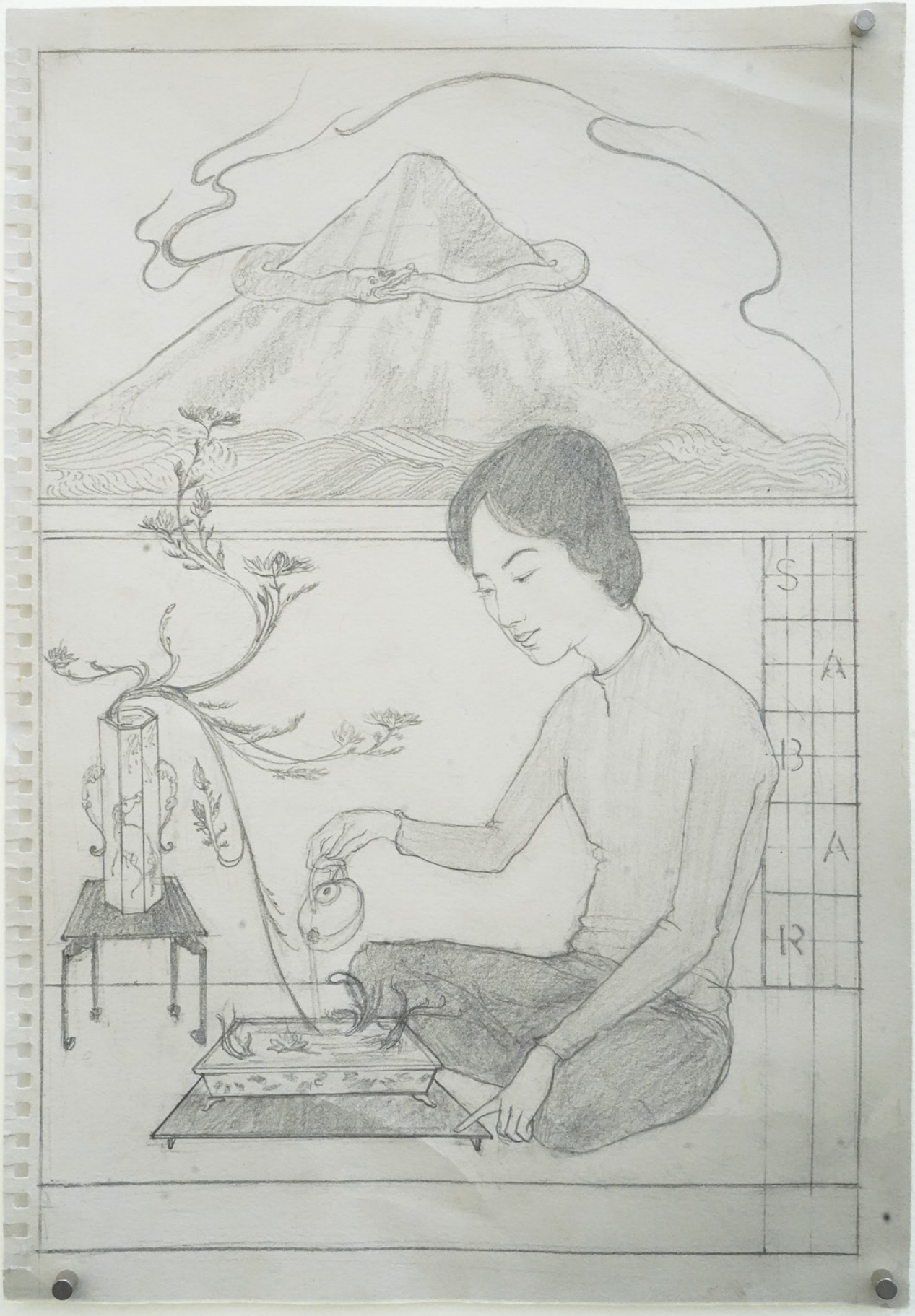
Say you love me, little boy!, 2026
oil on canvas
80 x 60 cm



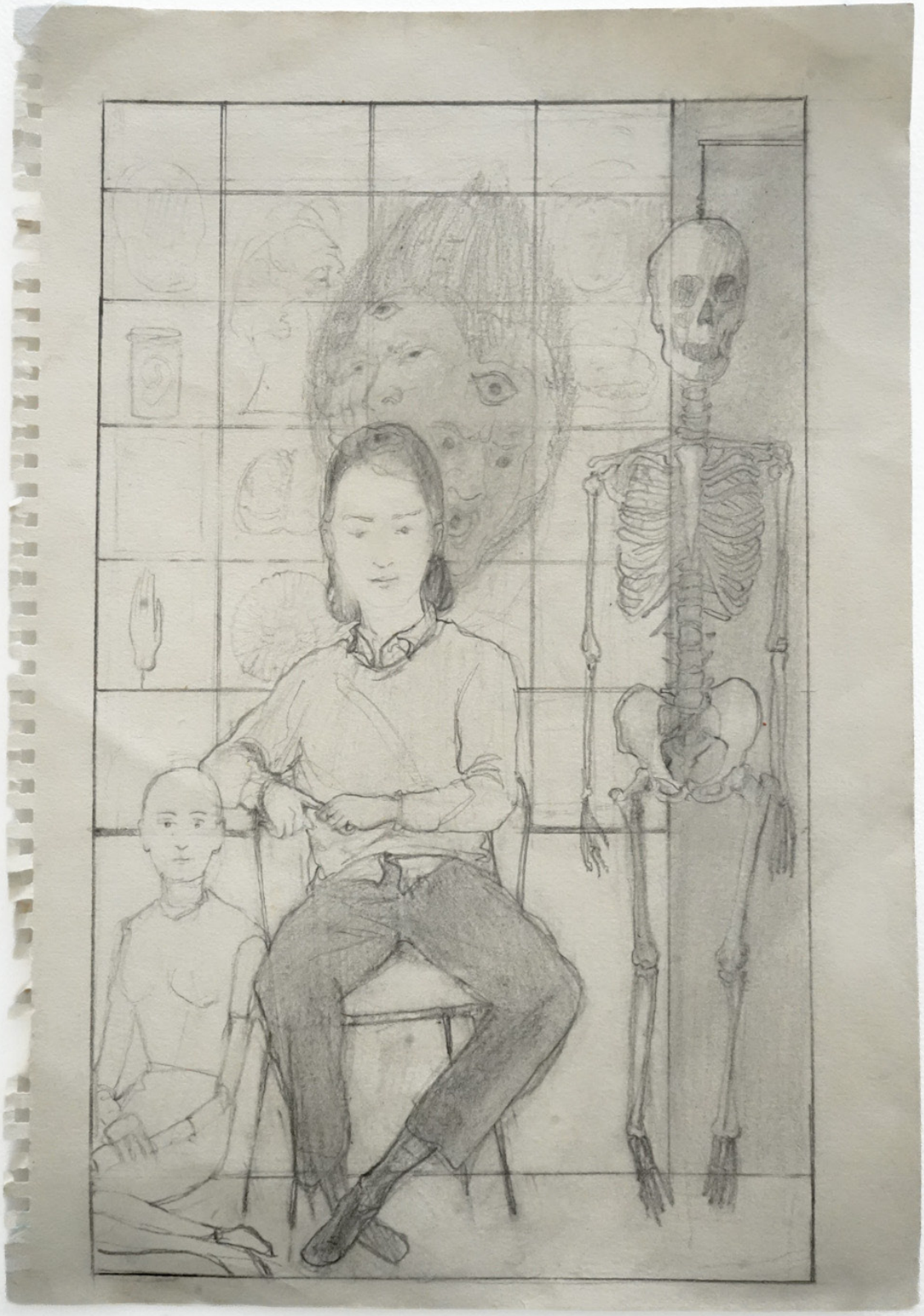
Stay down, Brother. Listen to me., 2026
oil on canvas
70 x 100 cm



Karno Tanding//the battle between YES & NO, 2026
pencil on paper
37.5 x 22 cm



Wong sabar/ a patient guy, 2026
pencil on paper
37.5 x 22 cm



A rebellious man. The monk of the left-hand path, 2026
pencil on paper
37.5 x 22 cm

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Suliswanto Urubingwaru, commonly known as S. Urubingwaru, is an artist, researcher, and writer. In his works, Urubingwaru often intersects visual art and literature as a means of exploring narratology. He uses fiction and interpretation to address themes of history, myth, and identity across various mediums, including drawing, painting, installation, and interactive installations.

b. 2000
Lives and works in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

EDUCATION
2019 - 2026 Indonesia Institute of the Arts (ISI), Yogyakarta, Indonesia

SOLO EXHIBITIONS
2026 *World Word: Imagining the Lost, Narrating the Silent*, ara contemporary, Seoul, South Korea
2026 *As I Lay with My Head in Your Lap, Camerado*, ch+ch arts, Seoul, South Korea

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2026
Art Jakarta, ara contemporary, JIExpo, Jakarta, Indonesia
PULSE 2, Haridas Contemporary, Singapore

2025
NGARIUNG, Dia.Lo.Gue dotHub Space, Bandung, Indonesia
Art Jakarta, ara contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia
ARTJOG 2025: Amalan, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
There's a word I'm trying to remember, for a feeling I'm about to have, Appetite, Singapore
We Begin with Everything, ara contemporary, Jakarta, Indonesia
Stockroom by Stockroom Bar, RUCI Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia

2024
Define Comedy!, Isa Art Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Tumbuh Rimpang, NonFrasa Gallery, Bali, Indonesia
Wunderkammer: A Space of Oddity, Galeri Fajar Sidik, Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Pulse, Haridas Contemporary, Singapore
Fugitive Shadows, Ace House Collective, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Lost in Whimsy Wisdom: Interplay of Realities, Isa Art Gallery & Omah Budoyo, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Salon et Cetera, Ace House Collective, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Like a Crowd of Extras, Seven Sisters Gallery, Houston, Texas, USA.
OMNI: Allegory of Distance, Galeri Ruang Dini, Bandung, Indonesia

2023
Mon Reya La Banne, Lembana Artgroecosystem, Sumenep, Madura, Indonesia
Keep the Fire On, Survive Garage, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
(Se)tempat, Titik Kumpul Collective Project-Asana Bina Seni Biennale Jogja, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia
A Thousand Words, Orasis Art Space, Surabaya, Indonesia
Hearts of Darkness, Studio 22nya, Jakarta, Indonesia
Labirin, Healing, dan Ruang Kremasi, Galeri R.J. Katamsi Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2022
Shape Shifting, In Collaboration with ASAU Boutique, Grand Wijaya Center, Jakarta, Indonesia
Rekam Masa, Artopologi, Indonesia National Museum, Jakarta, Indonesia
Pair of Dice 22, Anastomotic Collective, Cemara 6 Gallery, Menteng, Jakarta, Indonesia

2021 *Rite de Passage*, Aksi Artsy, Galeri R.J. Katamsi Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
2020 *To Much To Young*, Konak-konek #3, Balai Budaya, Jakarta, Indonesia
2019 Mini Art, Galeri Fajar Sidik, Indonesia Institute of the Arts, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

COLLECTIONS
Tumurun Museum, Solo, Indonesia
UOB, Indonesia

SELECTED AWARDS AND PRIZE
2025 ARTJOG Young Artist Award, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
2020 Bronze medal in the painting category, The National Student Art Week (PEKSIMINAS), National Achievement Center
2018 2nd best order Cultural Short Story, East Java Culture and Tourism Office, Surabaya, Indonesia

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