

Speaker 1:

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Sadiah:

Hello everyone. Welcome and thanks for coming out on this chilly lunchtime afternoon. My name is Sadiah, and I'm the curator of the Public Programmes of Asia TOPA. And I'm very grateful for presenting this talk in partnership with MPavilion. And let me start with acknowledging that we're gathering on the land of the Yalukit-willam. And they're the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today. And Yalukit-willam are part of the Boon wurrung, one of the five major language groups of the greater Kulin nation. And we pay our respects to their lands, their ancestors, and their elders, past, present, and to the future.

Sadiah:

So today's talk is part of the Asia TOPA takeover of the MPavilion during their lunchtime. We started yesterday with a first talk with Benjamin Law and we continue until the 15th of March. So throughout this month, you will get to meet a lot of our very unique guests that are presenting at Asia TOPA. And today I'm very happy to be talking to director, Kamila Andini and dramaturg Adena Jacobs about their intercultural collaboration for the Seen and Unseen. Just a little bit about the Seen and Unseen, it's a theatre dance production produced by Performing Lines in conjunction with Fourcolours Films, Komunitas Bumi Bajra and Komunitas Salihara in Jakarta, and it was co-commissioned by Esplanade in Asia TOPA. And it just opened last night at Victorian College of the Arts, and it's still running until the 29th of February. So please go get your tickets if you have not seen it yet and enjoy the show.

Sadiah:

But I'll first introduce you to the speakers of today. So first Kamila Andini, born in Jakarta. And she's back here because she studied sociology and media arts here at Deakin University. Her concern of social culture, gender equality and environmental issues, lead her passion in filmmaking and gives her a very distinctive perspective of storytelling. In her first feature film, the Mirror Never Lies, was screened in more than 30 festivals around the world and received some awards. And her second feature film the Seen and Unseen premiered at Toronto International Film Festival last year and also got a number of awards including the Grand Prix International Jury Prize at Berlinale Generation Kplus.

Sadiah:

Our second speaker of today Adena Jacobs is artistic director of independent company Fraught Outfit. She was a resident director at Belvoir in 2014, 2015, and she was a Female Director-In-Residence at Malthouse Theatre in 2012. Last year, she made her UK operatic debut directing Strauss's Salome for the Eno and London's Colosseum and her production of the Howling Girls was presented as part of Tokyo Festival World Competition in October last year. So please welcome Kamila Andini, so glad to have you here after the opening nights. So congrats on the show.

Kamila Andini:

Thank you. Very nice to be here.

Sadiah:

A bit tired. I'm sure you're a bit tired now, so thanks all the more for coming out. So I thought today maybe we can talk a little bit about the artistic, cultural... Artistic collaboration between the two of you, and perhaps Kamila, for those in audience who don't know that much about the Seen and Unseen, maybe you can explain a little bit about what the Seen and Unseen is about.

Kamila Andini:

Well, it's a long. Well, the Seen and the Unseen is actually a dance theatre piece based on my second feature film. Basically, the story is around... It's a piece of art, death and life, life and death about twin sister and brother whose experience... One of them is sick and then experience dying. But the Seen and Unseen is actually about a philosophy in Bali we call Sekala Niskala, and in English it's actually the Seen and Unseen. It's a philosophy about that Balinese belief that their life tends to accept and tends to hug everything that is good and also the bad things, and also the good thing in life.

Kamila Andini:

So in here I try to search on connections, the beliefs that we have, how we pursue life, how we see things in life, and trying to portray a lot of things in this two between world. I think that's a little bit about it. And the peace working together with a community, a children community in Bali called Bumi Bajra. So the six dancers, they're all in between 12 to 15 years old. And yeah, they were actually also in the film. So the main cast is actually the main cast of the film as well. The film was released five years ago, so they've growth up until now. And we all actually been in this project together since 2011. So we've been in a decade together exploring the subject.

Sadiyah:

Yeah. So we actually saw your film earlier this week, the Seen and Unseen, and now you just opened the theatre work. What was it that you wanted to turn the film into a stage work?

Kamila Andini:

Well, I used to dance when I was a kid, and I think the performance, dancing has always been, as an Indonesian, it's always been in our daily life. It's always been part of the ceremonies. So I always interested in that. But as a filmmaker, I know that film is my medium to express. And then when I make the Seen and Unseen, it contains a lot of movements in the film. It's actually not by proposed, but during the process because what I talk about something that is not describable, it's not very favourable. So there is some point when I write the script that I need to have other kinds of expression to talk about this things that I cannot even describe it. It's a feeling. So when I met Dayu Ani, the choreographer and the community, I was like, "I think I need to have this element in the film. Element of movement, of dance that I feel like it could say what I want to say without being very descriptive or very favourable on it."

Kamila Andini:

So the film has a lot of dance and movements in it, although at that time I didn't think it will be turned into something else other than movie. So after the movie release, one of the producer, Jala, came to me and, "Didn't you think to make a dance theatre out of this? A theatre or any kind of performance out of this?" Well, I made an art installation out of the subject before, but I never think about as a performance. But when I see the kids, when I see the choreographer, I know that they have this potentials, that it's more than what I portrayed in the film. I mean, in the film they come into my world, they come into my medium, but they're actually performers, they're not actors and actress.

Kamila Andini:

So when I see them, I think like if I do this... Like I want to see more of them I think, that's why I make the performance. I wanted to see more of them. I want them to have more space than what I gave them in the film. And it's actually who they are, performers. So when that question came to me, I was thinking like it's going to be interesting to actually now the other way around. Like I came to their world this time and then let them do what they actually usually do for every day since they were kids. So that's when it started. And then I came to [Ashiotopa Lab 00:09:43] in [crosstalk 00:09:47]. And I met Adena, and I met Eugene, the stenographer over there. So then the collaboration started.

Sadiyah:

So maybe this is a question for both of you. How did this collaboration... How did you get to meet and how did the collaboration develop from there? Because I remember that we all met during the lab in 2018 and how did you two... Was it like a set up?

Adena Jacobs:

It sort of was like a setup. Stephen Armstrong emailed me and he said... Who runs Asia TOPIA, "I have a secret project to talk to you about." And then I met with him for coffee and he said, "Secret revealed." And he gave me the link to Kamila's film, and talked a little bit about the project, but not a huge amount, just basically said, "Watch this. This is an artist I'd like you to meet and to collaborate with." And when we met at the lab, it was very, very early days of listening to Kamila's ideas about what she wanted to make. What her vision is for the piece where, what kind of... We introduced Kamila to Eugene and to Jenny Hector, the lighting designer, to think about how a collaboration with designers might work from Australia.

Adena Jacobs:

And it was just very kind... From our end, just sort of stepping a toe into this world, which as time developed we got to understand more and more, as you say, not only had you all been collaborating since 2011, but the performers have been working with Dayu really since they were born. It's an ongoing process that we were entering into. So it was a fascinating experience for us. But yes, we were match made in that way. And I think it's a very open and generous and challenging thing to do in a way to bring new people into a space that actually is such an intimate one and very close to Kamila and to Dayu in many ways. Anyway, there's a lot to say about all of it, but that was the beginning from our end.

Kamila Andini:

Yeah, as in for me as well... Well I've been writing the ideas since 2011. I remember when I released the movie, it was like seven years until it's done. At that time, I actually wanted to move on from this space because it's been in my head for seven years and I'm writing another movie right away after that. Because I talked to the producer if also I want to move on from this subject. So when actually that... I came here with the theatre because I didn't expect that I will make this, I felt like, "Okay," then it's something the universe had, I cannot move on this one. I have to go into a process which is actually interesting because as well the philosophy is very deep. You actually never go to the bottom of it. So you kept on growing with it and keep the process.

Kamila Andini:

One of the things that I like to do and I make even film as well is also collaboration and that's what I always looking forward, especially for the pieces that I've been writing for a long time because I've been always been with myself for such a long time and it's not actually really good. So collaboration somehow gave me different things. Like I have people to discuss to see it from other people who... Because I always feel when we create something, distance is very important. It cannot be very close, but you cannot also very far from it, with the subject. So collaboration somehow create that sort of balance of distance like, some people can be really close and some people can be really distant and that's what creates the balance, I think.

Kamila Andini:

So Stephen introduced me to Adena. I also saw, not really see it, but I saw some of her works and I met Jen and Eugene who also works with them. I think I felt like even when it's different medium, it's film and theatre, but sort of how we create. I like to create things organically somehow, and I can see that also in Adena's work. So I said to Stephen, "I think it has some sort of same fusion and connection also from what I saw." So yeah, we started to talk and everything and yeah, it just go like that.

Adena Jacobs:

I mean it's interesting. I think when I watched the film for the first time on some level I understood why Stephen had asked me to do it. And then I watched and I thought there's something about this film that I kind of intrinsically understand both about the... I don't know about the core relationship of the siblings and the way that played out somehow in the film, the metaphor of that and also the way that Kamila uses space and nonverbal language in the film, which is something I'm also very interested in.

Adena Jacobs:

There's probably quite different ways that are interest and trying to express things that are outside of language or hard to describe or these sort of subterranean worlds that exist under the world that we live in in different ways. But I think on some level I felt like there's definitely the simpatico, but as time has gone on, I think what's been revealed more and more is obviously the kind of the very deep cultural layers of the film that are even probably more on the surface or above this production in some way. Because as you say, it's sort of a direct expression from the kids. And that was something which was very much outside of my realm and not something that I knew very much about.

Adena Jacobs:

So it was sort of this dual thing of on some artistic level in terms of process and form and a kind of I guess inhabiting a feminine space as well. And a sort of dream logic. Lots of things where I thought, "Oh cool. That's really exciting to be introduced to an artist's work who you don't know but feel quite close to." But then also like... Eugene will be able to speak to this too, [inaudible 00:16:32] layers upon layers of meaning, which I still feel like even after two years maybe I'm at the surface of. There's just more and more and more. And so that's, in some ways very close in some ways very far from the material, which is interesting, as you say the closest in the distance.

Sadiyah:

Yeah, I think it sounds like a very ambitious and very challenging projects, very exciting and inspiring indeed. And I was actually wondering about these cultural layers that you mentioned, because there are so many sort of new elements to this work. This is your first work, like a performance work. And then for you, I don't know, maybe it was the first time that you turned a film into a performance, a stage work?

To what extent were these... I guess I have so many questions at the same time, but maybe let's start, like how do you start unpacking all these different layers and how do you start working? Turning this film into a performance work? How did you do it in practise? Like you said, "And then we just went," like you just go. But how do you go from an idea and a concept into really turning it into a different medium?

Kamila Andini:

Well actually what is always been interesting for me, is the different kinds of expressions that I know that I couldn't do also in film. In film, everything has to be based on reality somehow because it's a medium that actually made to portrait reality. So everything has to feel real, even if it's not. You work based on scenes and settings and you create it like life actually. But what's interesting, exciting for me was to express in different kind of things of that. In the beginning... Because performance art, theatre, dance, everything, also one of the thing that I like to watch and enjoy. So since the beginning, it was actually already a bit narrative. Because it's based on film, but then how to express all the of the part of the narrative.

Kamila Andini:

I remember there are things that very useful for me because Adena also watch a lot of movies and she also fan of the movies as well, the cinema. She kept saying, "You can actually make shots also in the stage. It's like a close up and things like that." And for me... Then I remember, I think it's during the workshop we sort of discussing about shots and the different kind of shots in film, but it's actually feel the same like to create close ups and things like that.

Kamila Andini:

And it's really exciting for me to still think in that matters, but to express it in different way with lighting and with the help of the other, the setting, the lighting and everything. And it's actually possible to create cinema in theatre. So that's actually then what I kept in mind that even there is no projectors and film, but I can create cinema in the stage. So that's actually what we've been doing then, with all the elements, like how to create this if you want to see it close or wide or these kind of things and how to express this and how to express that, I think that's a little bit.

Adena Jacobs:

There's so much to talk about, isn't there? This question... I think within my own work as a director, I've adapted a number of films for the stage. And so maybe part of the thinking that happened in those projects, we spoke about in those early days. But what's interesting maybe about this as an adaptation is, it feels to me not so much as an adaptation of the film to stage but more a kind of... It's like it kind of goes into the core of the film and create something new from the performers. It's like the kind of underlayer of the film that is then presented on stage. So actually the form and medium is really different. But then once we've been in the theatre working with the scenography and the lighting compositionally, it feels like the kind of... Kamila is [inaudible 00:21:41] I as a director that process of creating these visual frames and landscapes, it starts to come into play in a really exciting way. And of course we all think if only we had much longer in those spaces all the time. Such a big part of the work is the visual composition.

Kamila Andini:

One of the thing that I adapt a lot is that the... Because in the film, the main character is a kid between... And then the ghost children have only a little part on it. But I love this characters actually, but it's just a bit hard to create this story in the film. So that's why in the theatre I put more space to them as well. But it's true that the work is actually never actually finished, never actually done up until now.

Adena Jacobs:

You've reminded me of something as a sort of a tangent, but I think Kamila was very strict that the theatre work should really bare no reference to the film in a visual sense. And we were very attached to the film and there's incredible moments that really linger in your mind, incredible visual moments. And we'd go, "We've already solved this problem, why don't we just do it like that? You've done it perfectly before." And the challenge of this work that was set was to create something new which captured the essence of it and could go deeper into some layers of it, or focus on other areas of the myth. But you were very adamant that it wouldn't pertain to the film.

Kamila Andini:

Yeah, because it's very different as maybe I haven't mentioned this before. One of the thing that I explore around in the film was what is realism and surrealism. I made that film because I felt the reality of Indonesia, the reality of Bali is very surreal. So in the film, I tried to catch surrealism in the reality, like really in reality. So I put things in the reality to create sort of surrealism. But in theatre, it doesn't work like that I mean, the place is already surreal. If you put surreal, it's even more surreal. So it's just like 180 degrees different times. So even when it's already worked in the film, I felt like the medium is different. It doesn't work like that, it doesn't connect like that. It has to be something new, like new approach to see surrealism and realism somehow. I think that's the thing, the texture is very different as well.

Adena Jacobs:

It's very different. And maybe an important part of the process to think about too is the way that initially Kamila had written a kind of treatment I suppose, of the story, which was then given to Dayu Ani, the choreographer to kind of start working on these moments. And so it was sort of both being translated through choreography in a very deep way with the kids and then via design and dramaturgy with an Australian team. So both of those things were happening simultaneously and then together and increasingly together and together as it progressed. But this core story was being interpreted in a way, in two different countries, at the same time.

Sadiah:

Yeah. That's quite interesting actually. And I wanted to talk more about these different cultural layers that you've been mentioning both and of course. And especially since the whole concept of Sekala Niskala, is basically the whole basis for the work. How did that pan out in the different working realities and also the understanding and conceptualization of the work in an intercultural collaboration like this?

Adena Jacobs:

[inaudible 00:26:03] Eugene.

Sadiah:

Eugene, did you want to [crosstalk 00:26:09]. Oh Kamila first? Okay.

Kamila Andini:

And then Eugene please.

Sadiah:

Okay, sure.

Kamila Andini:

One of the challenge of the project is... I cannot even describe this... I don't think I'm a person to describe everything about it. It's something that is inside and you cannot actually describe things. So that's actually the challenge of the collaboration as well. I cannot really tell what it is. It's about experiencing, it's about seeing, it's about feeling and understanding in a different way, as a different way than just telling them this is what and what and what.

Kamila Andini:

But that's why it's been a long time, it's like two year for us. And they came to Bali for several times. I don't know if it helps or not that, yeah. I need that process of experiencing and understanding and connecting in a different way than just explaining sort of. It's just as in word, it's based on explanations I think. Can Eugene have a mic?

Eugene:

Yeah. As you were saying, there are a lot of cultural layers to unpack and... I don't know where I should sit. We didn't go into it pretending that we knew everything or anything at all. And I think it did really help to have a lot of time and a few developments particularly in situ [inaudible 00:28:07] in Bali because we needed to understand what this energy is. It's not about a visual, it's not about something that you can research online. It's something that you kind of just have to experience. And it was this energy that you speak about, this surrealism, at one point we kind of toyed with this idea of magic realism, but it's hard to speak about. But I think ultimately we felt a bit of it. And this feeling and sensation is what... For me personally, what sort of contributed to my contributions to the work as well.

Sadiah:

Yeah. So how would you describe this feeling or sensation that you... Just wondering, how can this be shared with the audience? How can you at least maybe describe a feeling or a sensation that you feel like you've experienced?

Eugene:

Well I guess this is the question, how do you show this in the work? And have the work as a tool of communication to the audience? I think what came through quite clearly, well not quite clearly... What came through ultimately is that... Kamila was saying a lot that it has, this set particularly, has to be natural and tangible. Like you say that and you have various thoughts of what it could be, but it's about experiencing. I remember when one night, we had dinner by the beach and then we went walking on the beach, and so we realised that there was this black dog that was walking towards us very quickly. And then he came to us and then he barked very loudly at me. And it was quite a shocking experience and then it just left. And then I told Kamila afterwards about it and you said that it is part of the belief that sometimes... I don't want to... That people can become-

Kamila Andini:

Yeah. In Bali there's some also... Because the Seen and Unseen also talk about two different worlds, the worlds of the seen and the world of unseen as well. And this magical, mystical also feelings that come in everyday, little things, life, and in Indonesia is very like this. This is why a lot of people is very superstitious because there is very thin layers of real or is mystic, or is not real. And actually a lot of black dogs, not always and not all the time. We have creatures as well, like people who can turn into animals. And yeah, those kind of things. So it could be not. [crosstalk 00:31:41]

Adena Jacobs:

The dog might've been a person. But it's sort of hard to describe these developments, but I guess what I can say is, it's not the kind of creative developments that I suppose we'd been used to in an Australian context, which usually comprise of sitting in a room, and discussing ideas, and looking at imagery, and then working with performers, sometimes in very organic and loose ways. Not too dissimilar to the kind of feeling of the rehearsal room in Bali. But it's very much takes place in a rehearsal room of some kind. And I think as you say, it was experiential. We Eugene and Jen and I arrived in Bali, yes, not knowing much yet, we had obviously met at Asia TOPA, but feeling very new, and then Kamila.

Adena Jacobs:

And if her partner called and said, "A bus will come and pick you up tomorrow morning, we're going to a funeral. Because Dayu Ani the choreographers, husband's grandmother had passed away and we'd like you to come." And we thought, "Oh my God, this is quite unbelievable." And we drove to sort of many hours to this place and it was incredible, so generously, we were invited into this most extraordinary ceremony. I had never been to a funeral ceremony like this with hundreds of people and offerings. And yeah, very surreal, kind of incredible sort of images and objects that people were holding. And we joined this procession of people, with this woman being walked down the street and we watched the ceremony of her being burnt and people were in a very quite a beautiful open, celebratory sort of mood with music. And some of you may have experienced this before, but we certainly hadn't.

Adena Jacobs:

And was on many levels. It was quite extraordinary and an insight into what this process would be, which was, it's more than a show. It's about entering a community. Entering a way of seeing the world. Entering this energy, being invited. We met Dayu, the choreographer there at the funeral and she was just like, "Hello, nice to meet you." I was like, what? It's such an intimate space and also such a communal public space at the same time. And also, the theme of death is so embedded in the work, in the film, and in the show too that Camilla and I are saying, we actually need you to have a glimpse of what this means in Bali and some of the traditions and customs and understanding visually how colour is so important and so many, so many aspects of it.

Adena Jacobs:

But that was the first morning of our development. And so, it was really disorientating in the most wonderful way where we just realised straight away that we just had to go, we had to just enter and just be in. And then later that afternoon we went to the rehearsal room, which the performance in Bumi Bajra, we rehearsed outside. And we arrived and they were all meditating and doing yoga, which is the beginning of their practise. And Eugene and I as part of my company, Fraught Outfit, have worked a lot with young people in Australia, and we're used to walking in on kids crying and "I want to play this game," and first aid kits and just chaos after school and it's just sugar high and all of that. Even though

they're incredible performers, it's just wild and loose. And then we walked into this space where this practise was deeply embedded in the bodies of these very young performers in an incredible way. And so that was day one and on and on from there.

Sadiyah:

Wow, that sounds very intense, but really, really beautiful. Yeah. Maybe Kamila, maybe you can speak a little bit more about your work with the community, Bumi Bajra? How did you get to know them and how did they how did the performance influence the way in which the work has been shaped?

Kamila Andini:

Well, I know them quite a long time, since I was still studying here in Melbourne, I think I already know them. Me and Dayu Ani sort of know each other. I know that she is a choreographer foremost in Bali, but I really came to Bali actually at that time. So the first time I met her again after a while is in 2009. And at the time, I already have ideas for the Seen and Unseen. But I have write it. I know that the story of her and her family since before that, since 2005 or something. So she came from a family... Her father is actually one of a maestro in Bali. She came in a family of artists, like the whole family is an artist that actually brings the belief of the father.

Kamila Andini:

And I always been fascinated with this family because they're just so disciplined and very nice, like the Von Trapp Family of Bali, I think. Really they can do anything and they really have a very different kind of process and approach than other Balinese because they are there Hindu, Buddhist, so it's not only Hindi. So they practise yoga and also music and like the father believe body. It's a culture that you have to build since you were a kid. That's why they are very focused on teaching children. So I fascinated the way they put music and then poems and alphabets and movements into bodies like by breathing, by connecting to the nature, to the universe, by doing... Practising every day making everyday life is part of your discipline of your body and mind.

Kamila Andini:

I don't know if I described this well, it's quite hard to describe as well. But they have this thing that for me, I'm very touchy... Like it's very connected to everything, to their belief, to the spirit of the knowledge, to the spirit of the culture and the spirit of art itself. So in 2009, I told her, "You're making this piece of chicken fight." And I think like this is very real but surreal at the same time. And then they actually make the performance in the chicken fight place. So it's sort of like a gambling place in Bali usually, it's quite often. They make a chicken fight and they gamble, and it's very man's world, like all kinds of man is over there. So instead of chickens, we see two kids dancing and fighting over there with the real people, like shouting on them.

Kamila Andini:

So it was really something, that I kept it in mind. So now when I actually write Seen and Unseen, I thought of that. That it makes me realise that every movement in Indonesia's dancers is actually comes from the nature. Like the way our body bend, the way our eyes goes and everything is actually comes from the movement of the nature itself. And I just realised how much we are actually very connected with it. So this is the start of the Seen and Unseen, and how I collaborate with the Dayu Ani. So that's true, for example, the kids, the first time you see the kids you felt like they can do anything. They're like

very professional and there are many movements that they can do, but what people don't know the first time they see them it's, they also a character that already built for many years.

Kamila Andini:

So even when they're so good, but they have their own rhythm, they have their own character that's already in there. And that sometimes me as a creator or also everyone was trying to make something new out of it. But what we realised during the process, we don't need to do that, we need to actually embrace what they have and what their potential is. We try to... Because we see a lot of things, we know what is good and what is not. We want to make this. Like for example, we thinking me and Adena the same, we also think we have to play with the dynamic of movements, like very fast and then slow.

Kamila Andini:

And it's very interesting as a contemporary dance that we always see. But these kids already has their rhythm and their rhythm is very, very slow because they always practise like that. Like they counted like one, two. So they never have a very fast rhythm and it's not in there. Even when they do fast, they're trying to be something else. And this is what we realise. And also for us it's sort of like a process to understanding someone, to understanding and to sort of connect and make a piece based on the pattern shell, not like trying to make something else. I think that's what I felt the most.

Adena Jacobs:

Yeah, In a way, I think you've encapsulated the key, there is so much leaf blowing behind us, the key to the process in lots of ways. I think when we all came into the project at the outset, it's true, both the nature of the film itself and the incredible potential of the performers and this new collaboration, the dynamic of the collaboration and what it could create, you sort of in some ways have a thousand ideas of what this thing could be. And our process at first was to throw many, many ideas sort of at the table partly as a way of just entering the process and giving Kamila and Dayu a sense of our own instincts so that they could decipher and sift, because we were coming into their space and their world.

Adena Jacobs:

And throughout the process too, there were so many times when the challenge was to, on the one hand, I suppose I'm speaking for the Australian team, but I think it was an experience of the whole group, which was about going, "How can we bring ourselves as artists truthfully to this project. Bring our skills to bear, but at the same time, absolutely be truthful to the energy and the rhythm of the piece, which is ultimately embodied by the kids and the rhythm of their choreography and their practise?" And actually looking at the work, even though the choreography of course has developed over the past year and a half, they actually are performing many of the same gestures they did in that very first rehearsal that we saw of theirs, which was not their first rehearsal of course.

Adena Jacobs:

It's just been deepened and deepened and there's been variations made and new material is suggested by Kamila. And there's a lot that's grown, but in a way it's deepened rather than expanded, if that makes sense. And so yeah, it was about us coming very much to them. And of course it's interesting to bring up the idea of contemporary dance or contemporary performance because in some ways, it is a piece of contemporary performance in that it's kind of using the skills of contemporary artists to create a frame for the audience to watch it. But it's also something else. It also doesn't operate on the terms, well, I

suppose certainly not in the terms of an Australian contemporary artists, and possibly not an Indonesian contemporary artist either.

Kamila Andini:

I think there's also one of the thing that we've been always discussing, like how much contemporary, how much traditional? And that's still a question I think until now, yeah? We never actually answer that, like how contemporary it is or how traditional it is. In the beginning we were... I think I was also a bit quite worried, is it traditional? Is it contemporary enough? That's a question that's always there, but I didn't think we need to answer that anyway.

Adena Jacobs:

And I also think, oh, sorry, I keep cutting you, oh, no, I also think contemporary is, I think it can often be seen as a style more so than the actual process or the content. It's like should this look contemporary or should this reference other works that we know or operate in a mode that is based on things that we see now? And I think maybe part of our question was going, does contemporary even matter? I think we sort of came in with this sense of that's maybe what we bring to bear, but actually kind of who cares about that as well.. I don't know the answer to that, but it's a question as well.

Sadiyah:

It is actually what I wanted to say too. Are these even useful concepts to apply to these kinds of works? Because there are many other works that have been created within the context of Asia TOPA and labels like contemporary or traditional, what does that mean in the 21st century? I think that's also something that we can really ask ourself. Maybe it's not so useful anymore. I think we still have a little bit more time for some Q&A. So I just wanted to see if there are any questions from the crowd who have come out to join us for this conversation.

Adena Jacobs:

Thank you for coming. Thank you all for coming.

Speaker 6:

Thank you so much. It's been really insightful and really interesting to hear from both of you. I was just wondering if you were able talk a little bit about what you could learn from each other as primarily theatre maker and filmmaker. And yeah, I guess you'd spoken a bit about maybe the differences in context in terms of working in the Australian performing arts space and the Indonesian performing arts space and some of the opportunities and challenges that present themselves in that sort of collaboration. Thanks.

Kamila Andini:

What I really learned actually that art is really no boundaries. One of the thing that decides me to do this also... Even when I make film, I don't really like to label things. If I make fiction or documentary or drama or such things, I think it can't be everything. And that's what I do. I try to actually cut out the boundaries, the labels, how to define my work. Even I see Adena, I told her like I can see a filmmaker in her. And I mean I think everyone can express in many ways they want to, because art is actual expressions and expressions is not limited by medium. And yeah, I think that's what I learned the most, that it's just borderless like expression is borderless. And what's the other question?

Sadiyah:

About the differences between the performing arts space in Australia and Indonesia and the challenges and opportunities?

Kamila Andini:

One of the things is, I was studied here long time ago and this is actually the place where I watch a lot of performance, many kinds of performance and films. This is the first time that I think I want to make filmmakers because actually that was the first time I can access the world of cinema. I don't have that in Indonesia. I saw many things and that's what makes me, "Oh, it's possible." Things are possible. I think that's what's amazing from our films and everything is that things are possible. So in Indonesia theatre even when possibilities a lot like everyone can make anything. Because the industry is... Maybe there's no industry... Is very different kind of industry. I don't know if I can call it industry or not.

Kamila Andini:

But everyone actually opened to create the many things, but we have to support ourself in everything, from A to Z. So we have to create from A to Z. So sometimes when you will want to make something, it's just you really have to do it from the ground to the out. And when I see it, compare it to here, look at here now, how many performance is going on in this minute? It's a lot. And that's what's for me, it's been amazing seeing actually people can be very productive here from this kind of thing is amazing because in Indonesia there is not many performance, there're performance, but more into like traditional ceremonies based, not from the perspective of art. So that's the difference that I also learn from each other as well, how to work. And actually I learn everything from zero in this space. So I got to know like where to do what, and what to do when, and how things have to work, and how the whole team will work. So it's like a big thing for me.

Adena Jacobs:

So it's a big question. I know we probably don't have that much time left, but just yeah to say a few... I feel like I've learned a huge amount from Kamila and from the process. And part of that for me too, was about the kind of fluidity that I felt from a lot of the artists on board from Kamila and Dayu, and also Ifa the producer, the way that the medium that you work in is not the boundary and it's not a category. And actually a lot of the Indonesian work that's presented in Asia TOPA, I think speaks to that as well. And I think in an Australian context, we become very fixed in our roles sometimes and fixed in our mediums and become a bit obsessed with categories. I don't know and I think there was something very freeing about being in a space like that.

Adena Jacobs:

And I think another thing too, which I was thinking, we haven't really spoken about this, but I think there's something very particular about the kind of feminist space that Kamila and Dayu create, which is very resolved in it's feminism and not angry. And that was something, as an Australian artist that I found very inspiring. I mean it's a truly feminine space in every regard and its energy and its process in the fact that all of your daughters are just running through the space at any moment in time to the work itself and very particular moments in the work that speak to that. And it's not reactive, it is just to me, my perspective on it just feels like it's its own way and you enter it and then that's how it works and that's a very beautiful thing.

Adena Jacobs:

And for me, quite has a very different energy and feeling to my experience of that hero being a feminist artist here and what that feels like. So that, yeah, there's that. And then I think also this... I think for me, I need to shift my thinking entirely as an artist in order to enter the project. In so far as so many of my references for performance are through a Western lens and a Eurocentric one, and to enter this space of Kamila's and the Seen of the Unseen, was to have to actually totally undo a whole lot of assumptions about what was... Maybe even what worked and what didn't, what read and what didn't. And as a dramaturg too, it's a very challenging thing, how meaning was transferred. To what extent did it matter if a Western audience could understand or not understand what's happening on stage and these kind of quite fundamental questions about what I was seeing and experiencing and how I was seeing and experiencing it.

Adena Jacobs:

And I think for me that I'll take that into my work in the future. A kind of an openness that I maybe didn't actually know I didn't have before the project. So thank you. It's a big thing to have to reorientate your way of thinking in that way, but a great experience to get to do of course, necessary, essential.

Kamila Andini:

Thank you for being my teacher as well. Everyone over here.

Sadiyah:

Well, I think on that note, we've come to the end of this lunchtime talk, so thank you so much for joining us. And thank you also the audience that was brave enough to come out as well. Thanks a lot and hopefully we'll see you all tomorrow, and please come to the show and to see the results of this beautiful process. Thank you.

Adena Jacobs:

Thank you Sadiyah as well.

Kamila Andini:

Thank you Sadiyah.

Speaker 1:

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