

Cosmology Series

Eddy Susanto

Introducing the works by contemporary Indonesian artist Eddy Susanto.

Eddy Susanto aims to provide insight in contrasting cultural or philosophical thoughts that occurred at the same time in history and reflect on its present-day relevance. For the Art Fair, Taipei Dangdai 2019, Eddy Susanto created works that combine two controversial ideas during the Renaissance, namely Physical Cosmology (a textual body of work) and Religious Cosmology (visual bodies of works).

Physical Cosmology is the scientific study of the origin of the universe and its evolution toward its final form, using the laws of science. Originally, Physical cosmology was associated with "celestial mechanics", the study of the heavens. Greek philosophers such as Aristotle and Ptolemy, proposed theories that considered the Earth as the center of the Universe. Much later in the 16th century Nicolaus Copernicus, Johannes Kepler and Galileo Galilei, proposed a Universe with the Sun as center. Particularly Galileo faced opposition in the Roman Empire in 1615 which considered heliocentrism as absurd in philosophy contradicting the Holy Scriptures.

Another theory by Sir Thomas Burnet in whose *Telluris Theoria Sacra (Sacred Theory of the Earth 1689)* connected theological views and geological processes. Burnet explains how the earth was formed. Before the Genesis flood the earth was an oval shape, smooth and uniform with water inside, resembling a paradise. Then the surface of the earth fractured, water underneath was released creating the Noah Flood, oceans and mountains were formed and over time the modern "corrupted" world was created.

Religious Cosmology, also called mythological cosmography, is based on mythology, religion and creation. An example of Religious Cosmology is in the Book of Genesis on the creation of Adam and Eve. Abrahamic traditions such as in Judaism, Christianity and Islam believe in such a "sudden creation". But the question about the origin of human being is not only part of religions but also of traditions. Many races develop their own creation myth as an effort to answer questions about the origin of their races.

At the same time, these answers contribute to develop strong group identities, which influence many aspects of life such as societal classes and politics.

The writing about the first human beings as in the Book of Genesis has been subject of much debate from the Renaissance until present times. This involves the theory of Evolution and Natural Selection of Darwin, but also the Modern Synthesis developed in the 1920s and 1930s that connect the natural selection and population genetics, based on Mendelian inheritance. Meanwhile, Burnet's vision on the Creation of Earth faced criticism not to be in line with the Book of Genesis in the time of the Renaissance. This debate continues into modern time with the development of Modern Physics, dominated by the Big Bang theory of Albert Einstein's 1917 publication of general relativity.

By putting together two bodies of works, Eddy Susanto created artworks that express controversies that existed at the same time of the Renaissance. Eddy Susanto 'borrowed' (appropriated) *images* of Adam and Eve painted by artists from the Renaissance era, which represent the Religious Cosmology. These images are recreated using the *text* from Sir Thomas Burnet's book, which represents Physical Cosmology. Thus, he literally 'united' elements from the two controversial bodies of works into single frames.

The controversial history makes us contemplate about the current situation, where religions, races and nations become part of societal and political identities that separates people through conflicts leading to psychological, economical and physical wars.

Jogjakarta, 25 May 2019

Edited by Carla Bianpoen and Andonowati based on text of Eddy Susanto