



Healing Garden, Hiromi said, also welcomes anyone to engage in the project. (JP/Tarko Sudiarno)

ART & CULTURE

ARTJOG: Garden that fosters emotional transformation

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The exhibition room that measured some 49 square meters looked very bright yet calming and was full of colorful artificial flowers made of tissue paper.

When a visitor or group entered the room, their faces promptly showed amazement after looking at the site specific work of Japanese-Australian artist Hiromi Tango, entitled *Healing Garden*.

They mostly stopped for a moment as they entered the room, curiously observed the artwork that occupied two thirds of the room — some of it reaching the ceiling — then looked for spots to take pictures.

“Let me put this on,” a girl said as she happily grabbed a flower made of tissue paper from a rack in the corner, putting it on her head before asking her friend to take pictures of her in different spots in the “garden”.

Other visitors also did not miss the chance to freeze the moment in pictures. Some stayed for quite some time, as if they were reluctant to leave the room.

Hiromi said *Healing Garden* was part of a new series of community-engagement projects that focused on creating safe, nurturing spaces that encourage creative expression and emotional transformation.

As such, members of the community were warmly invited to take part in this participatory installation and performance presented for the month-long ARTJOG at the Jogja National Museum in Gampingan, Wirobrajan, Yogyakarta, which officially closed on Monday night.

Born in Japan in 1976 and currently living in New South Wales, Australia, Hiromi said the artwork served as a personal expression.

“I created this work based on my experience in dealing with psycho problems in my own family,” she told *The Jakarta Post* after performing for *Healing Garden* at ARTJOG. Hiromi, who received her bachelor’s degree in arts from the Japan Women’s University, Tokyo, in 1998, is a multitalented artist whose works span installations, sculptures, performances and photography. She focuses on generating healing conversations through engaging with the arts.

She said since 2009, she had worked with many communities to create spaces that encourage participants and audiences to slow down, unpack their thoughts and feelings, and perhaps lighten their spirits along the way.

The art-making processes, such as creating tissue flowers, were shown to contribute to well-being in many ways such as simple meditative tasks like folding, sorting, wrapping and categorizing by color.

“This is shown to contribute to our sense of well-being, and to reduce feelings of anxiety and depression,” she said.



Say it with flowers: Artist Hiromi Tango performs next to her art installation *Healing Garden* during ARTJOG 2018 at the Jogja National Museum in Yogyakarta. (JP/Tarko Sudiarno)

In her previous projects, Hiromi explored an interface between nature and nurture, neural science, neuro-plasticity, genetics and the cognitive impact of colors on emotions such as depression and anxiety.

"Healing Garden continues this creative journey," she said.

As for her project at ARTJOG, she was inspired by local plants and flowers including rose, jasmine, amaryllis and cananga, each of which is believed to have healing and nurturing properties.

Amaryllis, for example, is used in traditional medicines for cancer and wound treatment. Roses are renowned for their sweet scent and the oil extracted from rose is believed to be good for healthy skin and the nervous system.

Jasmine is also famous for its fragrance. Tea made from jasmine is believed to be good for human health, especially in helping lower blood pressure and cholesterol, as well as strengthening the immune system.

Cananga, likewise, is widely used in traditional medicines to deal with various health problems ranging from headaches, anxiety attacks and treatment for people suffering from respiratory problems.

Hiromi said colors also play important roles in how gardens can make people feel particular feelings. The distinctive color of orange amaryllis, for example, is believed to have energizing power and is often associated with courage and determination.

The deep color of a pink rose makes people think of tenderness and love, while the white color of jasmine is often associated with light, innocence and purity. The green color of cananga, similarly, is believed to be calming and evoke feelings of wellness associated with being close to nature.

Healing Garden, Hiromi said, also welcomes anyone to engage in the project. As such, throughout the exhibition it continued to grow and by the end of the event the flowers were shared with the people.

“Which flowers will you use to create your healing garden?” Hiromi said.

ARTJOG’s founder and organizer Heri Pemad said the ARTJOG committee felt lucky to have Hiromi take part in the annual event because her artwork was so interactive and fluid.

“Everyone, regardless of their age, likes Hiromi Tango’s work. Her artwork is everyone’s favorite,” Pemad said, adding that the artwork had been an icon of enlightenment at the event, which had “Enlightenment: Towards Various Futures” as its theme.