

I PROMISE YOU ETERNITY

Turning grief into creative eulogy

Bali artists pay tribute to one of the island's finest creative minds through a moving performance that breaks barriers of all kinds.



JP/Lukman SB



Poetic: Luh Putu Indra Saskari (right) tells a love story in the traditional Balinese poetry form tembang.

JP/Lukman SB

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THE JAKARTA POST/KUTA, BALI

Muhammad Fahmi entered the darkened stage. He took several deep breaths to calm his nerves before slowly lifting his hands and starting the recitation. The verses were taken from the Quran's Surah Al-Isra'.

His beautiful voice clearly touched the hearts of the spectators, for all of them suddenly fell into an enraptured silence.

For some of them, the expatriates and non-Muslims, the literal meaning of the verses — the night journey of Prophet Muhammad from the Sacred Mosque to the farthest Mosque — may escape their comprehension. But Fahmi's voice, a moving melody of solemnity and melancholy, broke the language barrier and carried the message across.

In the shaded corner, several spectators were fighting off swelling tears.

The recitation set the tone for I Promise You Eternity, a collaborative performance staged Sunday night to honor the memory of Gentur Suria, a visual artist and rising figure in Bali's cultural landscape.

An easygoing and down-to-earth individual, Gentur Suria relocated to Bali from Yogyakarta several years ago and immediately began to make friends and build an extensive network with local artists.

Known for his monochromatic prints that cleverly employ lines, patterns, geometric shapes and letters to create "psychedelic" optical illusions, Gentur was very active in participating in and organizing multidisciplinary art events.

Affectionately called Hubin by his friends, Gentur passed away last March after suffering a debilitating episode of stroke.

"I Promise You Eternity is our homage to Gentur, and it reflects his passionate belief in the limitless possibilities offered by multidisciplinary collaboration," said Made Marlowe, one of the creators behind the performance.

A digital visual artist and disc jockey, Marlowe teamed up with Ridwan Rudianto, an experimental movie maker and editor, to create the performance.

It was a tightly-knit repertoire that integrated elements of various cultures from the predominantly Hindu Bali, from Islam and from the West. The Quran recitation opened up to the romantic rendition of a Balinese *geguritan* traditional poem featuring Indra Saskari and the uplifting melody of the *genggong* mouth harp featuring the Genggong Kutus troupe, before poet Maithila presented the finale.

Throughout the performance, black and white footage of Balinese daily life, rituals and art were projected onto a board a few meters behind the stage. The footage was selected and edited by Ridwan Rudianto and Aditya Ramadhan from the collection of the *Bali 1928* Archive.

The footage and its reflection on the pool below lent the performance a visual depth and thread that bound the different elements together.

"We have also created an augmented reality app of the performance. It merges Maithila's poem with Gentur's signature typography. It can be downloaded on the Google Play Store," Marlowe said.

The performance also involved Myra Juliarti, the creator of gender-fluid casual clothing line Siji, as its costume designer.

Held at Rumah 23, an avant-garde art hub cum villa in Seminyak, the remembrance for Gentur Suria also featured an exhibition of his works and personal belongings.

"Gentur once said it was very difficult to sell his printed artworks. He then experimented with creating these objects, and demand [for them] immediately surged," said Rumah 23 owner Harumi, pointing at a bed in the villa compound.

On top of the bed were a blanket and two pillows covered with Gentur's signature psychedelic patterns.

A second exhibition in the compound, organized by Ubud-based art house Cata Odata, focuses on multidisciplinary collaboration. Titled *Surat Balasan* (Reply Letter), the exhibit features mementos from some of Gentur's best friends and collaborators in Bali, including visual artists Ican Harem, Swoofone and XUF, as well as audiovisual art collective Chaos Non Musica, Brodking Vespa Club and shoe label Succoth. It runs until Oct. 13.

"Next year, we will organize a major exhibition of Gentur's artwork in Ubud," Cata Odata founder Ratna



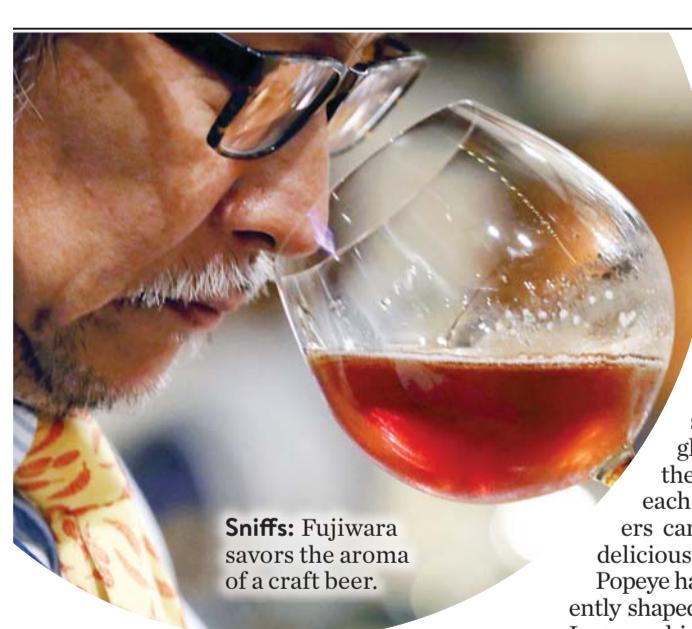
Courtesy of Cata Odata

Odata promised.

The performance and exhibitions reflect the determination of Gentur's friends to keep his memory alive. That determination was aptly captured by Maithila, when she declared, "Listen, Hubin, listen. Parting is inevitable. But in this cold, unmerciful world, I promise you eternity."



Tribute: The works of visual artist Swoofone flank a sign that reads: "Till we meet again in the next life, Uncle."



Sniffs: Fujiwara savors the aroma of a craft beer.

Nao Yako

THE JAPAN NEWS/JAPAN

Bars specializing in craft beers are brewing up a growing following as people seek out distinctive beverages that are a treat for the five senses.

Some of these establishments have devised creative ways to drink these beers and fully bring out their unique flavors and aromas. These lengthening autumn nights are ideal for savoring carefully crafted beers.

The bar Beer Club Popeye in Sumida Ward, Tokyo, is considered "hallowed ground" among craft beer aficionados.

An impressive lineup of beer taps blanket the wall behind the counter, and more than 70 kinds of beer are available at any one time.

According to Hiroyuki Fujiwara, head of the Japan Beer Journalists Association, a craft beer is an original beer usually made in small volumes, rather than those mass-produced by major breweries.

"In the past several years, the range of beer flavors and aromas has expanded," Fujiwara said.

"At Popeye, the staffers select the glass best suited to the characteristics of each beer so customers can fully enjoy the delicious taste."

Popeye has about 20 differently shaped glasses on hand. Lagers, which are brewed with yeast fermented at relatively cool temperatures, have a refreshing taste, so serving them in a tall, slender glass will provide a kick as they go down.

Ales are fermented at room temperature and have a distinctive aroma. Serving ale in a wide-mouth tulip glass — but only up to about halfway — will enhance the rich aroma.

"Beer has a diverse array of elements to enjoy, including flavor, aroma, color and level of carbonation. There's more to it than you might expect," said Hirotaka Kido, Popeye's manager.

Craft beers have been spreading in Japan since 1994, when a Liquor Tax Law revision significantly reduced the annual minimum beer production volume required for a brew-

ing license to 60 kiloliters. This opened the door for small beer producers. These products were initially called "local beers," and despite attracting some attention their popularity did not really take off.

They came back into the spotlight about five years ago when they became known as "craft beers".

Beer produced by small breweries boomed around the world, in countries such as the United States, and Japanese beers also earned a good reputation overseas.

"In Japan, there is an ingrained view that beer is a drink to be chilled and give a feeling of refreshment," Fujiwara said.

"But now that there are more high-quality craft beers, a culture of slowly savoring the taste is finally spreading."

A craft beer gets its unique flavor from subtle changes in the brewing method and the blend of ingredients used.

This year, tongues have been wagging over craft beers that use fresh hops — freshly harvested, domestically grown hops. Beer brewers conventionally use dried hops, but freshly picked hops add a fresh aroma. These beers are available only for a limited time.

"A brewer pours their heart and soul into a craft beer. I hope people will try various craft beers and find ones they like," Fujiwara said.

A drink for any course! Beer goes well with a variety of foods. Some restaurants let customers choose their preferred beer-food combination.

At Spring Valley Brewery Tokyo in Shibuya



Perfect couples: A "pairing set" of craft beers and snacks from Spring Valley Brewery Tokyo.

JAPAN'S CRAFT BEER A TREAT FOR ALL THE SENSES

Ward, Tokyo, a "pairing set" containing six craft beers and snacks matched to their respective flavors is a popular item on the menu. The set costs ¥2,300 (US\$20.20).

"It might sound surprising, but beer goes with any food — from appetizers to desserts," Fujiwara said.

For example, dark beers are a good match with chocolate cake. According to Fujiwara, the richness and bitterness of the dark beers goes well with the dense sweetness of the chocolate.

— PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE YOMIURI SHIMBUN



Closer look: Hiroyuki Fujiwara examines a beer in a glass at Beer Club Popeye, a bar in Sumida Ward, Tokyo.