

Echoing Balance

I have been searching for a medium for beings to have a heart-to-heart connection with the spirituality of the East to find balance and peace. In art I have found this connection, art that expresses spirituality in human terms, “Humanistic Spirituality.” According to popular belief, 3000 years ago, before the arrival of Hinduism and Buddhism in Java, animist priests would tell stories to the local tribe about their ancestors as part their ancestor worship ceremonies. To illustrate the stories, the priests would manipulate puppets to cast shadows on a screen, echoing the belief that ancestors return at night as shadows. It is believed that from these performances evolved the shadow puppet theater known as *Wayang Kulit* in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Growing up in Malaysia, printed text was rare. Seeing it on a wet old newspaper food wrapper was like receiving divine knowledge. Nowadays, text is everywhere – printed on brightly colored plastic bags, food wrappers, Styrofoam boxes, I create visual art from this sumptuous refuse based on traditional *Wayang Kulit* shadow puppets. As shadow sculptures, the figures stand silently alone, but they live, breathe, and speak for themselves rather than being manipulated. Traditionally, these characters represent duty, purity, good, evil, and courage. In my work, they demonstrate our duty to restore balance and purity in daily life by overcoming the ogres of gluttony and waste.

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