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| Abdullah, Basuki (1915-1993) |
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| Basuki Abullah was the son of the painter and illustrator Abdullah Suriosubroto (Mas Abdullah), who taught him and a number of other artists their basic artistic skills. From 1933- 1936, Basuki studied at the *Academie voor Beeldende Kunsten* in The Hague. Following this, he then travelled to Paris before returning to Java. While he only completed three years of the five-year course, his enrolment led to a portrait commission by Dr. Plesman — the director of K.L.M — and launched his career as a portrait painter. Having painted the portraits of Imelda Marcos, President Sukarno and a large number of other royal and political persons, Basuki Abdulla is often regarded as Indonesia’s most successful portrait painter. His portraits, however, are often overshadowed by his landscape paintings which, in conforming to the formulaic composition of the *Mooi Indies* (Beautiful Indies) landscapes popular among colonial painters, have earned him a reputation as a conservative painter and colonial sympathizer. Such landscapes — readily identified by their depiction of rice fields, coconut palms, blue skies and the inclusion of volcanic mountains — have suffered terribly from their association with colonialism, but have recently increased in popularity among Indonesian collectors. This renewed interest stems from the understanding that Basuki’s career, whilst inconsistent with the adversarial posturing of Europe’s avant-garde, embodied a form of modernism reflecting the tension between class and national concerns in a period of dramatic political unrest. |
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