**Amanda Rath**

**Sadali, Ahmad (1924, Garut – 1987, Bandung)**

Ahmad Sadali was an iconic figure of the Bandung School and remains a key influence as a pioneer in modern abstract painting in Indonesia. Sadali, along with But Mochtar, Mochtar Apin, and Srihadi Soedarsono, was among the first generation of Indonesian students in the Bandung School. His early work of the 1950s demonstrates the direct influence of his teacher, Dutch painter Ries Mulder (1909-1973), whose own work was influenced by the Cubist work of Jacques Villon (1875-1963). Immediately upon graduation in 1953, Sadali became one of the first Indonesian lecturers of the Academy. Sadali was a key figure in the development of a modern Islamic art and its discourse in Indonesia, for which the principles of abstraction in modern painting were well suited. A devout Muslim and the son of a founder of the Garut chapter of Muhammadiyah, Sadali perceived painting as a spiritual act, as a way of seeking God’s blessing, and as imbued with *tasawuf* (inner mystical quality). He referred to his paintings as visual meditations, and the act of painting as a form of *zikir* (repetitive acts leading to a mindfulness of God).

Sadali’s works become increasingly abstract and devoid of narrative following his studies in the United States as a Rockefeller Foundation grant recipient in 1956-57. He studied painting and arts education at the Iowa State University, and at Columbia University and the Art Students League in New York. During his tenure as lecturer, professor and later Dean of the Fine Arts Department at ITB, Sadali was known for his innovations in the medium and practice of painting. Influencing several generations of ITB students he introduced new materials considered unconventional by preexisting standards to build thick textures onto the surface plane, as well as the use of powdered pigments, and gold paint and gold leaf. Besides numerous solo and group exhibitions in country and internationally, beginning in the late 1960s he participated, along with fellow ITB artist, A.D. Pirous, in many group exhibitions of specifically Islamic artists.

**References and Further Reading**

George, Kenneth M. (2010) *Picturing Islam: Art and Ethics in a Muslim Lifeworld*. Chichester, West Sussex, U.K.: Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Holt, Claire. (1967) "The Great Debate." *Art in Indonesia: Continuities and Change*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, p. 211-52.

Iskandar, Popo. (23 December 1972) “Seni Melalui Virtuositas: Suatu Portret tentang Ahmad Sadali [Art through Virtuosity: A Portrait about Ahmad Sadali].” *Berita Yudha*. Reprinted in Bambang Bujono, and Adi Wicaksono, eds. (2012) *Seni Rupa Indonesia Dalam Kritik Dan Esai [Indonesian Art in Criticism and Essay]*.Jakarta: Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, p. 201-205.

Spanjaard, Helena. (1990) "Bandung the Laboratory of the West." *Modern Indonesian Art: Three Generations of Tradition and Change*. Ed. Fischer, Joseph. Jakarta and New York: Panitia Pameran KIAS/ Festival Indonesia, p. 54-77.