

Hana Madness HARNESSING MONSTERS IN HER MIND

Inspired by symptoms of bipolar disorder, Indonesian artist Hana Madness emphasizes human resilience in her work.



Manic Depressive Narcissistic Family by Hana Madness

Sebastian Partogi

The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

If you see Indonesian artist Hana Madness' works, you will see cheerful, brightly colored paintings of smiling monsters in many shapes and sizes.

These works of art, including those on display at her exhibition, titled "Suddenly Monster Part 1", at the Artsphere pop-up gallery in the Senayan City shopping center, Central Jakarta, in January, were inspired by her struggles managing her symptoms after being diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2013.

"I believe we can advocate for mental health issues in a more fun way, using cute images. It doesn't always have to be dark," Hana told *The Jakarta Post*.

One work called *Siko Family* features characters that visually describe her experience taking a number of mental illness medications. It is displayed alongside a piece called *Super Cranky*, describing a phase of her bipolar disorder.

Hana's ability to turn her painful bipolar episodes — the monsters in her mind — into art demonstrates just how acutely aware she is of her symptoms.

She said she was constantly learning about her illness and how to handle it, including by taking medication, and was armed with an optimism that her condition could be treated and managed.

"My mind often becomes fearful. It wanders here and there in overthinking. I am also easily startled and hypervigilant. My mind can become very noisy at times [...] with self-loathing and fears about the future. I experience physical fatigue and lethargy because of it," Hana said.

Driven by the spirit of artists in many disciplines, including Keith Haring, Jean Dubuffet, Adolf Wölfli, Vincent van Gogh, musician Daniel Johnston and poets Sylvia Plath and Ann Sexton, Hana has been able to transmute the pain of her symptoms into beautiful works of art.

She also demonstrates her acceptance of her illness by calling herself Hana Madness. Madness is the name of her favorite British ska band, but by taking it as her last name, the artist, who was born Hana Alfiki, turns around a word that people use to stigmatize mentally ill people and wears it as a badge of empowerment.

The empowerment of mentally ill people is also a prominent theme on Hana's Instagram account @hanamadness. It features the monsters for which she is known best but also includes comments by other people who deal with mental illness and find strength in Hana's art.

"I feel very satisfied whenever I discover that my art has impacted other people positively — those who say that they are inspired to do the same thing or to motivate their mentally ill children to express themselves through the arts while finding the best way to treat them," Hana said.

"Most importantly, we want to make mental illness survivors feel less alone and boost their desire to stay alive," she

added. Having used her art for advocacy, she also lists the title "mental health activist" on her most recent curriculum vitae.

Hana is passionate about her cause for a reason. Having survived childhood trauma and sexual violence growing up in the industrial area of Cakung, East Jakarta, which she terms "Jakarta's own Bronx area", she initially faced misunderstandings and an often harsh stigma against mentally ill people.

Her parents failed to understand their daughter's illness at first, initially blaming her for her condition, even taking her to a *ruqyah* (Islamic exorcism).

Hana's teenage years were especially harsh. She started to sense the symptoms of her illness back then: feeling sad and crying for no apparent reasons, being paranoid all the time and so on. In her house she felt misunderstood, and at school she had no friends.

She often wandered outside her house, including at night. But eventually she found her own people, communities that eventually sparked her creative powers. Also, a blessing in disguise from these times — she earned her street-smarts along with her refined interpersonal and communication skills, making her a very articulate person.

"I was hanging out with people who did lots of art and who were also part of the local punk rock and metal scene," Hana said. She found her life's purpose when she started drawing.

Doodling was especially helpful in allowing her to express her chaotic emotions rooted in her childhood trauma, but she could also draw clothing patterns, which earned her not only money but the respect of

her schoolmates, who paid her to design dresses for them.

She has also started to receive commissioned art projects from various corporations, the earliest being from national match company Tokai.

An important milestone in her artistic career came in 2011, when she joined an exhibition titled "Sister be Strong" at the Bau Tanah street gallery in Menteng, Central Jakarta, having formed a network with her fellow visual artists.

In 2012, she was featured in an article for daily newspaper *Kompas* and appeared on Metro TV's talkshow *Kick Andy*, propelling her career further.

In 2018, she joined the UK/ID Festival in England, part of her collaboration with the British Council, working together with British artist James Leadbitter (known as the Vacuum Cleaner), who is also open about his mental illness, to conduct workshops in the Bethlem Royal Psychiatric Hospital in London.

Hana said she felt a sense of soli-

darity with the mentally ill British artist, which gave her a sense of relief.

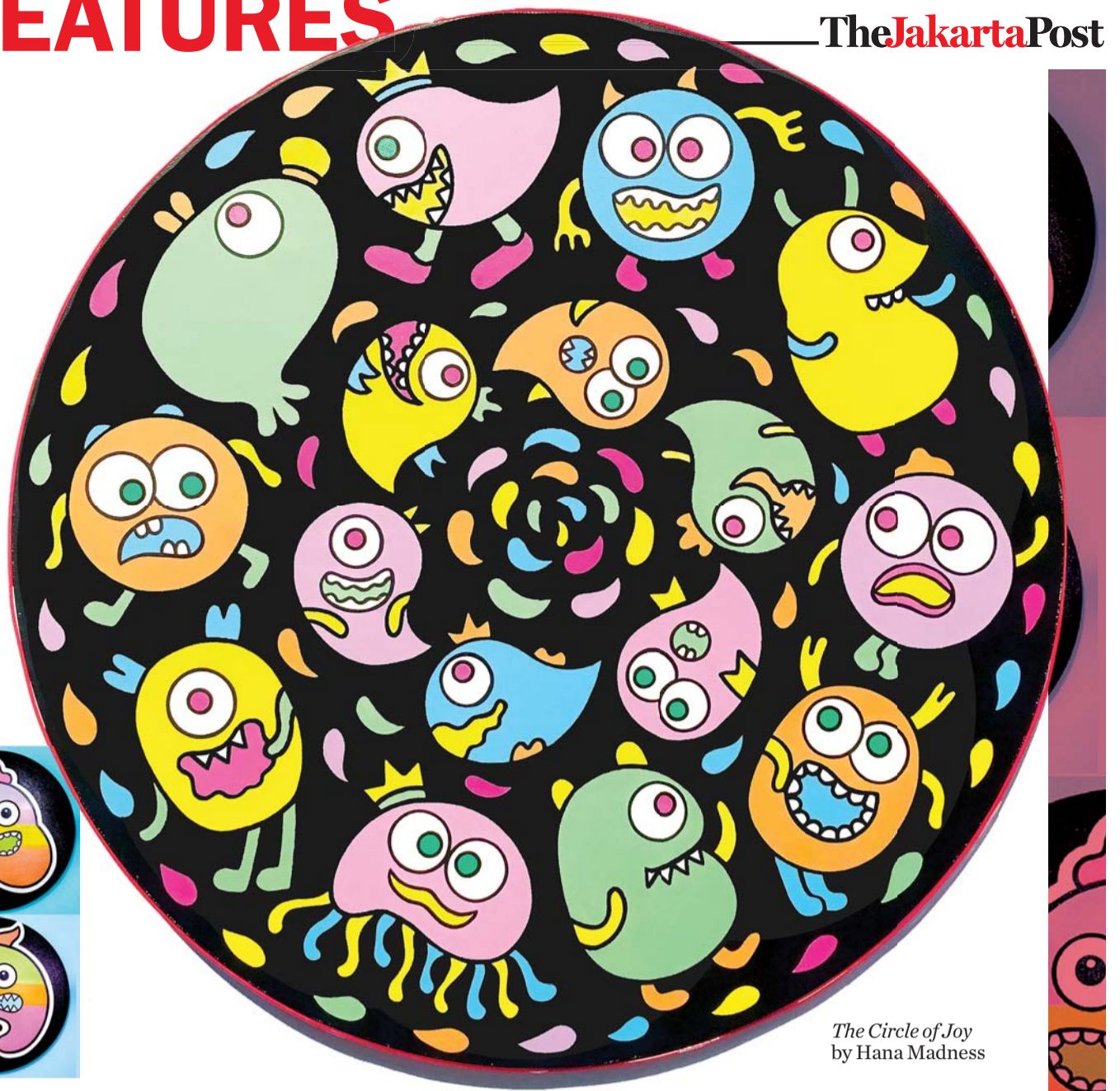
She was also invited to speak at various panel discussions on mental health.

Being proud of their daughter's self-actualization through her career, Hana's parents have now become more accepting of the way their daughter is.

"Instead of being super-anxious about me like they used to be, now they will just calmly advise me to take care of myself when the going gets rough," Hana said with a warm smile on her face.

She was quick to add her journey was not always smooth, even now that she had launched her artistic career. She thanked her biggest supporter: her best friend, currently also her primary caregiver.

"To be honest, recent times have been quite rough on me, as I have become so exhausted lately. I feel useless when I don't have much work to do, and conversations with many people can trigger old wounds, but I always tell myself the darkest times have already passed." (ste)



The Circle of Joy by Hana Madness



JP/Sebastian Partogi

Resilience: Artist Hana Madness poses in front of a mural she painted with an inscription offering solace to fellow mentally ill people.

Gabriela Hearst



AFP/Angela Weiss

AFP/JP Yim/Getty Images

Agence France-Presse

New York

From recycled cashmere and protective clothing for uncertain times to singer Debbie Harry and tennis star Maria Sharapova, AFP takes a look at the latest highlights from New York Fashion Week.

DRESSING RESPONSIBLY

Gabriela Hearst cemented her reputation as the flag-bearer of high-end responsible fashion with a stunning fall-winter collection that focused on sustainability at New York Fashion Week Tuesday.

Hearst's designs were all made from natural fibers, including recycled cashmere and remnants of antique Turkish rugs that were pieced together to form long coats.

Many of the sweaters, cardigans, shawls and dresses had been hand knitted by Manos del Uruguay, a nonprofit cooperative of female artisans from Hearst's home country.

Lady in red: Gigi Hadid walks the runway for the Proenza Schouler fashion show during February 2020-New York Fashion Week: The Shows in New York City.

NY Fashion Week CELEBS, RUGS AND ROCK 'N' ROLL

The collection had a distinctly 1970s vibe with hand-painted leather coats and designs chosen from mandalas or abstract shapes associated with dreams.

Any carbon footprint from the show will be offset via a donation to a project that aims to save the Cardamom forest in Cambodia.

"True luxury is knowing where everything comes from and how it is made," said Hearst, who grew up on a sheep farm in Uruguay.

VERA WANG'S ACE

Tennis star Maria Sharapova served up a celebrity appearance in all black at Vera Wang's show held in a plush Upper East Side mansion just off Central Park Tuesday.

The multiple grand slam winner sat front row alongside *Vogue* editor-in-chief Anna Wintour and English fashion journalist Hamish Bowles at the event, which ends Wednesday.

Models glanced at themselves in the grand residence's elaborate mirrors as they walked through the house's various rooms wearing black silk chiffon paired with thick platform heels.

Seventy-year-old Wang's evening wear also included a neon yellow French tulle corset and a green floral featherweight stretch long sleeve bodysuit.

"I wanted to bring a kind of im-

portance but a lack of formality, a kind of ease, youth, charm and delicacy to the evening," Wang told AFP.

DEBBIE HARRY'S TRIBUTE

Rocker Debbie Harry rolled back the years as Coach 1941 paid tribute to New York's past, present and future Tuesday.

The Blondie lead singer, 74, performed alongside Atlanta band The Coathangers as they added a 1970s touch to a collection that celebrated "New York's unique creative energy".

More than six years after taking over as creative director, British designer Stuart Vevers continues to evolve Coach, which will notch its 80th anniversary next year.

After shifting to a more urban collection last season, Vevers accelerated that movement with a distinctly vintage streetwear look this time around.

The flat sneakers, large socks and hipster hats were straight from the streets of Brooklyn while several designs were inspired by the paintings of local artist Jean-Michel Basquiat. "New York was the ultimate muse for this collection," Vevers told AFP.

GIGI HADID

If jury selection had gone differently then United States model Gigi Hadid would have been in court for Harvey Weinstein's rape trial in-

stead of walking the runway for Proenza Schouler Monday.

Hadid, 24, was last month excused from serving as one of the jurors in the high-profile case owing to her fame after appearing for the first round of prescreening.

On Monday, she lined up for Proenza Schouler's 2020 fall-winter collection, which, after a spring show that evoked the 1980s, approached the present and near future head-on.

The New York duo of Lazaro Hernandez and Jack McCollough showcased a series of large, thick coats complemented by big shawls, designed to provide protection in an "unpredictable decade".

"For us it's always a mood, an attitude. We just take it from the world around us," Hernandez told AFP, following the late Monday show.

"Things are falling off, falling apart, unraveling but then held together. It's just like how people feel right now."

Coach

AFP/Stavros Viasic/Getty Images