



## Characteristics, Forms and Techniques of Making Combined Figure Sculptures by Laksmi Shitairesmi

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### **Abstract**

Laksmi Shitairesmi is a female artist from Yogyakarta who specializes in painting, sculpture, and installation, as well as other two- and three-dimensional media. Because she freely shares stories about herself and her experiences as a Javanese woman trying to balance the roles of housewife, artist, and wife, her works have a strong appeal. The various visual components she shapes and arranges in her sculptures or reliefs, as well as the stories she tells in them, can prompt us to consider our own lives. The stories in Laksmi's works are always autobiographical; the autobiographical aspect of her works clearly features self-portrait images, although they also often take the form of animals such as pigs, dogs or elephants. She views these forms as representations of herself that are symbolic and connected to a particular round of personal experience. Her mixed-figure works, which include animals with human heads, elephants with human feet, humans with mouse heads, scorpions with human heads, and so on, demonstrate this. Lakshmi's sculptures are interesting to study and learn about because of their intricate techniques and composite figure forms with diverse attributes.

**Keywords:** *Art; Sculpture; Figures*

### **Introduction**

Art has evolved over time. Contemporary art continues to develop around the world which has an impact on the globalization of modern art. Indonesia is also experiencing the development of contemporary art. Both Indonesian art thinkers and art workers are starting to be able to take part in curating, judging, exhibitions, championships, and international art auctions.

This situation implies how well Indonesian art is currently developing. Over the past twenty years, a number of Indonesian artists have taken part in esteemed international events. Some of the artists who have won international awards include Edhi Sunarso, Sunaryo, and Suraji, Ivan Sagito, G. Shidarta Heri Dono, among others. (Susanto, 2004).

Yogyakarta will appear when discussing the existence and evolution of Indonesian contemporary art. One of the centers of the growth of contemporary art in Indonesia is the city of Yogyakarta, even Yogyakarta artists are often considered as the main figures in this field (Irianto, 2000).

Modern art has influenced various art disciplines, including graphic arts, painting, sculpture and other art forms. In addition, the boundaries that existed in the media have faded or even vanished in contemporary art. It is increasingly difficult to distinguish sculpture from painting, or sculpture from craft or other art forms. The lines that previously separated different art forms no longer exist. Therefore, artists who originally worked with two-dimensional media-also referred to as painters, printmakers, and so on-no longer have to adhere to the same standards and regulations as when they displayed three-dimensional works in various forms that represent modern art.

Endang Lestari, Yani Mariani, Rita Widagdo, Iriantine Karnaya, Tita Rubi, Edith Ratna, Altje Uly, Dolorosa Sinaga, and Laksmi Shitresmi are some of the women artists who created three-dimensional works, but many artists who created three-dimensional works in the past are no longer known. Painters, printmakers and other artists who first worked with two-dimensional media often exhibit three-dimensional works in various formats that reference modern art.

Laksmi Shitaresmi is a female artist from the city of Yogyakarta who specializes in sculpture, installation art, painting and other two- and three-dimensional media. Laksmi is one of the many Indonesian women who are still working as artists, and active exhibitors. Laksmi has participated in numerous national and international exhibitions. Because she freely shares her story and her experiences as a Javanese woman trying to balance the roles of housewife, artist and wife, her works have a strong appeal.

Although Laksmi often depicts self-portrait imagery in the form of animals such as elephants, dogs or pigs, it is still clear that her works are autobiographical. She approaches these forms as self-portraits that are symbolic of cycles of personal experience. In Laksmi's previous works, this symbolic visualization has been the main focus (Supriyanto, 2012).

Laksmi uses her imagination to the fullest to create beautiful works that blend a mystical, fairytale-like atmosphere with modern elements. Her mixed-figure works include animals with human heads, elephants with human feet, humans with mouse heads, scorpions with human heads, and many more. His sculptures often have forms reminiscent of eerie surrealist paintings, where strange creatures seem to emerge from another world (Sunarta, 2010).

Lakshmi's sculpture stands out from other figurative sculptures because of its many symbols and figures. In particular, the many symbols on this statue give the impression that this statue is more elaborately engineered. Lakshmi's sculpture is interesting to research and study because of its complex technical details and its figures that have various characteristics. Based on the background description above, the author wants to write a question that will be turned into a writing outline, namely: 1. What are the characteristics of the Laksmi Shitaresmi statue? 2. What is the shape of the Laksmi Shitaresmi statue? 3. How is the technique of making the Laksmi Shitaresmi statue?

## ***Research and Discussion***

### **1. Characteristics of Laksmi Shitaresmi's Combined Figure Sculptures**

One of the many female painters in Yogyakarta who still produces two- and three-dimensional artworks is Laksmi Shitaresmi. Paintings, sculptures and installations appear in her work. Laksmi acquired her sculpture-making skills while studying at the Indonesian Institute of Arts. Although her concentration was more on painting, being in the fine arts department forced her to take basic fine arts classes, one of which was sculpture. Laksmi eventually became interested in creating sculptures and installation artworks. The symbolic form of Laksmi's sculptures is a striking aspect of her sculptures.

Laksmi's sculptures contain various symbols in addition to composite figures, which are usually the most obvious examples of symbolism.

Most of Laksmi's sculptures are smooth and slippery to the touch, but some of them still have a texture that shows the personality of the animals she uses. Based on the textural features of her sculptures, Laksmi uses mostly resin and metal materials. Judging from the materials used, it can be concluded that modeling and casting procedures are the means Laksmi uses to create her sculptures.

One shade of color dominates Lakshmi's artworks, the colors are intense and appear weighty. Depending on the medium used, Laksmi's sculptures can have varying hues of color. Sculptures made from fibers use a variety of vivid colors, including black, dark brown, and red. Many chemical colors designed specifically for copper are used in sculptures made of copper; these colors include red, green, and blue. Although some sculptures combine various colors with aluminum, the hue of most aluminum metal sculptures is the same as the metal itself.

Laksmi has created sculptures by combining various forms, starting when she studied at the Indonesian Institute of Arts. According to Laksmi, inanimate objects, inanimate animals, plants and human figures all appear in her sculptures. The figures she often uses are those that combine human and animal figures. Laksmi uses a variety of creatures, such as rabbits, geese, pigs, dogs, buffaloes and elephants. By modifying the characters and concepts developed in each of her works, these animals are chosen for her sculptures.

Laksmi always incorporates plant elements into her sculptures, which function as ornaments to beautify her works. The house symbol, and the boat symbol as well as the ball symbol are wrapped in lace and decorated with vines. the vase symbol contains a plant that symbolizes a glass symbol, the world ball symbol snail symbol the plants shown are vines, but the shape is not like vines in general, but vines in the form of stiliran.



Figure.1 Detail of the statue form of Figure Laksmi  
(<https://indoartnow.com/artists/laksmi-shitairesmi>)

The Lakshmi statue resembles a mythical creature at first glance; usually, combination figures give mythological creatures a sinister appearance. Combination figures have existed since time immemorial; mythological creatures dating back to ancient times are often represented by them. The Lakshmi statue resembles a mythological creature by virtue of its shape, and it appears attractive, as it shows its own characteristics.

Besides the combination of figures, another feature of Laksmi's sculptures is the abundance of symbols, with at least two or three symbols appearing in each of her works. Lakshmi's sculptures contain

symbols, each of which has a specific meaning. Laksmi puts various types of symbols. The symbols used can be in the form of living beings, inanimate objects, humans, or abstract forms. In Laksmi's sculptures, the symbols that are often used include chakras, brushes, globes, apples, and umbrellas.



Figure. 2a Big Biyung  
(Laksmi shitaesmi 2012 <https://indoartnow.com/artists/laksmi-shitaesmi>)

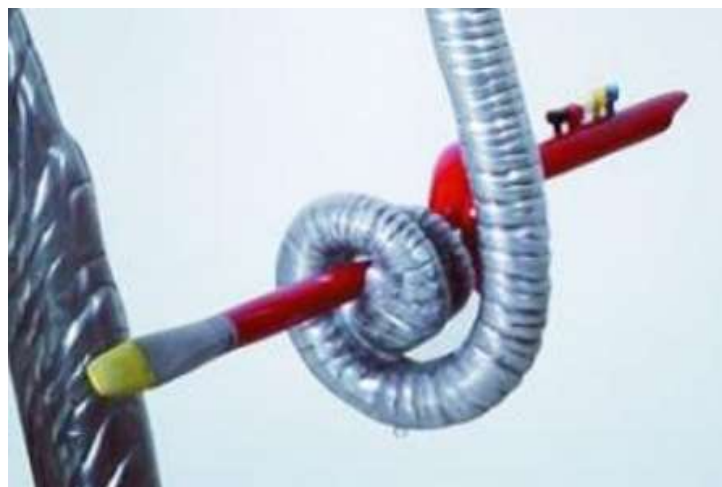


Figure. 3b Big Biyung  
(Laksmi shitaesmi 2012 <https://indoartnow.com/artists/laksmi-shitaesmi>)

The globe or sphere that depicts the world is the third object symbol that is often used. Globe in KBBI (2008) is an imitation of the earth, a spherical map of the planet. A globe is an object that depicts the location of life, where living things, including humans, call home, and a representation of the entire world. Laksmi's Harmoniest sculpture is one example of the use of the globe symbol in her work.

The umbrella, influenced by Javanese culture, is the fourth symbol. The umbrella, also known as *songsong*, is an important symbol in Javanese culture and is often seen during traditional rituals such as weddings and funeral processions. Laksmi interprets the umbrella as nurturing and protection. In her work, the umbrella symbolizes a mother's protection and nurturing of her family, especially her children.

The apple shape is the next symbol. Lakshmi claims that it is a common symbol that is often used to express pleasure. It is true that the apple is often mentioned in various religious traditions, both as a forbidden fruit and a sacred fruit, such as in Northern Europe. In Northern Europe, paganism placed a high value on the apple. In Greek mythology, the apple symbolized fertility. It was also associated with love in Greek mythology as the sacred fruit of the goddess Aphrodite.

## **2. Shape of Combined Figure Sculpture by Laksmi Shitaresmi**

### ***a. Big Biyung***

One of Lakshmi's sculptures influenced by her hero Salvaor Dali is called Big Biyung. The sculpture, which is in the shape of an elephant with two gold-colored tusks and measures 112 cm x 77 cm x 42 cm, was made in 2010. Four people who appear to be riding the elephant sit on what appears to be a small boat carried by the elephant.

Behind the boat are plants that resemble ferns, and in front of the boat can be seen umbrellas of various colors. The edges of the bluish-green cloth covering the elephant's back are decorated with golden tendrils. The edges of the cloth are decorated with golden vines. A red brush hangs from the elephant's trunk. Elephants have long legs; the front legs are shaped like human hands and elephant feet, while the back legs resemble human feet.

The arrow in the front hand resembles a chakra; in the puppet story, the chakra serves as Krishna's weapon. The chakra has a wheel-like shape, with the segments of the wheel in the shape of arrowheads. Figure 3.a depicts the statue of Biyung Besar, and Figure 3.b shows the location of the symbol.

The brush is the second symbol that is often present in Lakshmi's sculptures. Paint is applied to the canvas or ground surface using a brush. Paint is applied to canvas or ground surfaces using brushes. animal hair (from pigs, horses, etc.) is the material used to make brushes. arranged, tied, and given a stalk to make brushes, animal hair (from horses, pigs, etc.) arranged, tied, and given a stalk (Nurohma 2019:1).

According to Laksmi, the brush represents her expression as an artist. Although Laksmi uses a variety of art media, the brush is the image most often associated with artists. The symbol can also be seen in the Big Biyung sculpture.

The statue, known as "Big Biyung", tells the story of a mother. The title of the sculpture immediately explains this: Big comes from the English word Big, which means big, and Biyung comes from the Javanese word Biyung, which means mother. Laksmi claims that the Big Biyung sculpture is a portrait of herself. The sculpture depicts how exhausted this woman is in living her normal life irt and as an artist raising four children.

Asymmetrical composition is used in the Big Biyung sculpture. Aluminum was used to create the sculpture. The main color of the sculpture is the original color of the material, aluminum, but the symbolic accessories of the sculpture feature a variety of colors. The sculpture uses a variety of coloring techniques. Using the electroplating technique, a layer of real gold is deposited on the aluminum to produce a golden color. electroplating process. The ivory part of the elephant and the decorations on the sides are both colored gold. Colors other than gold, such as red, green, blue, and so on, can be applied with the air brush method using polyurethane paint and air brushing techniques.

The green plant symbol, the green brush, the dark green chakra with a combination of red, the yellow, red, blue, white, and light blue umbrella, and the light blue cloth covering the elephant's back are all present in addition to the symbols in various colors. The real silver color, which comes in various colors, represents the boat that the four children are riding on and is made of real silver.

The symbols on the boat had to be processed using real silver because printing them using aluminum would result in poor detail due to the very detailed size of the boat and the four children on it.

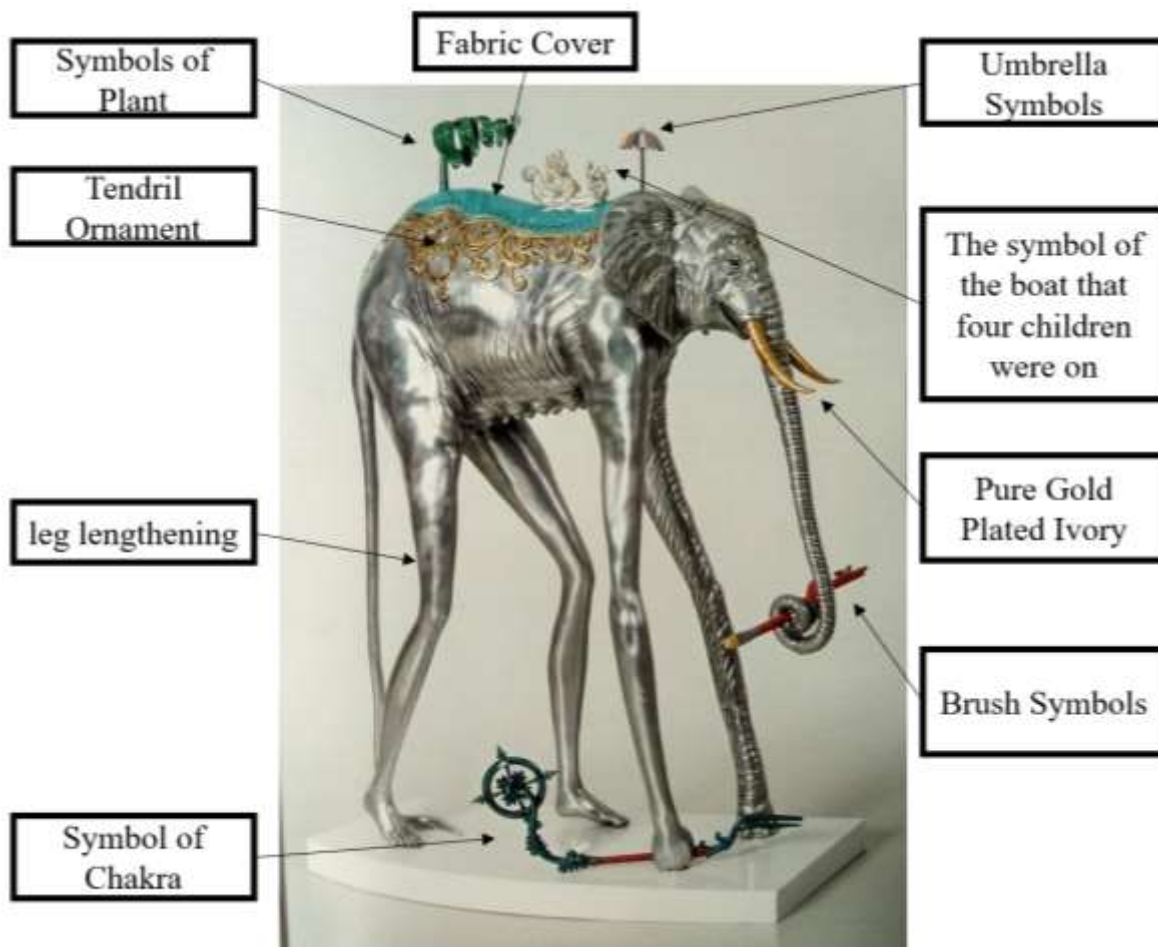


Figure. 3 Big Biyung

(Laksmi shitareshmi 2010 <https://indoartnow.com/artists/laksmi-shitareshmi>)

#### b. Khafilah Menggonggong, Aku Pun Berlalu (*The Caravan Barked, I Passed by*)

The four hands of the human figure represent various roles for which she is the hand that will bring balance to her life, in addition to being a housewife and an artist. A plant grows in a blue vase held



by a pair of hands. There is another pair of hands holding something above the two hands. When Laksmi feels depressed and upset, she plays a gamelan instrument known as the silver rebab, which she holds in her right hand. Her left hand holds a silver glass.

The human figure's hair is flowing and has stalks that resemble hands. In addition, he carries two objects, a brown boat and a yellow house, indicating that he is still working hard to move his household. Similar to the Javanese proverb "Alon-alon asal kelakon", the dog's orange tail egg signifies that he is trying hard to protect the seed of life that he planted. The dog also has snails on its body, indicating that it must move carefully at all times. The dog is wearing a red cloth with golden tendrils embroidered as lace decoration. The specific locations of the symbols have been depicted in Figure 4.

This sculpture has a symmetrical composition. Aluminum is used in the printing of this sculpture, while silver is used in the printing of certain symbols. The sword and glass are symbols composed of silver. The main color of the sculpture is aluminum, with accents of real gold and other colors such as orange, red, blue, and yellow. The plants and ornaments are gold-plated.

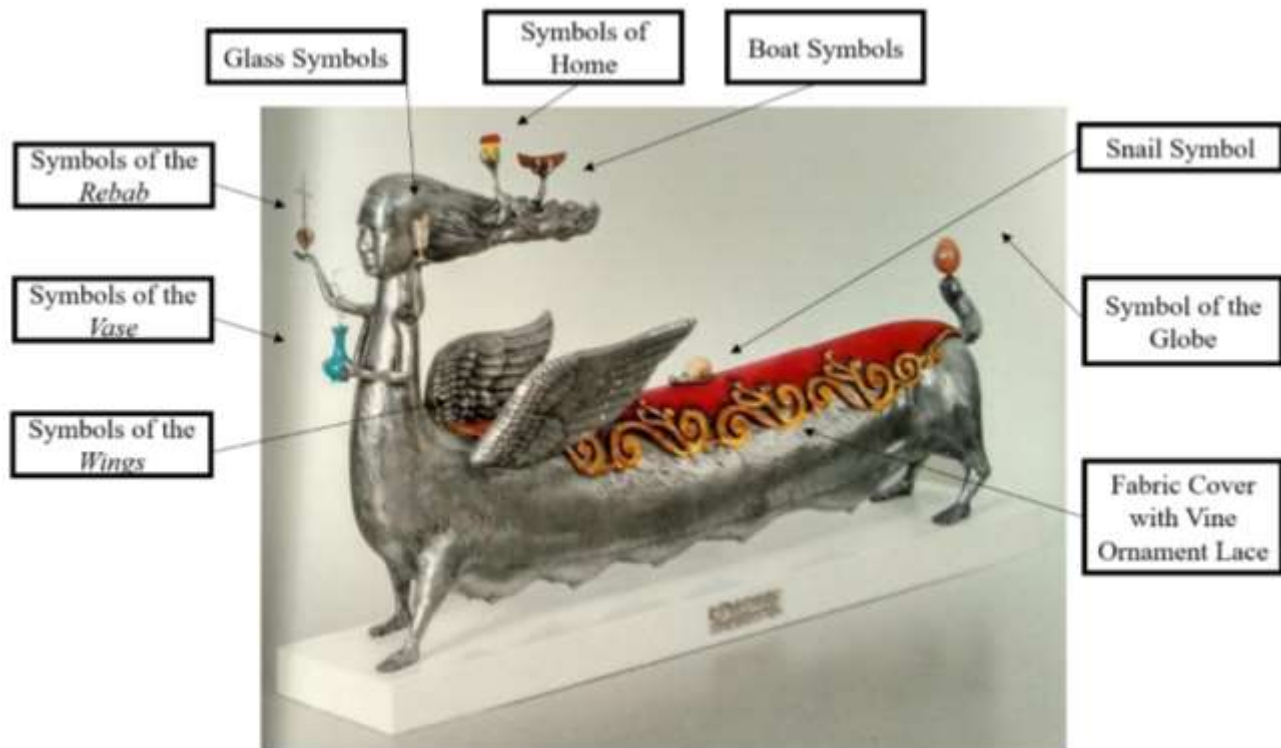


Figure. 4 *Khafilah Menggonggong, Akupun Berlalu*  
(Laksmi shitaesmi 2011 <https://indoartnow.com/artists/laksmi-shitaesmi>)

### c. Harmonist

The sculpture in Figure 4 shows the Harmoniest sculpture, a sow with four pairs of breasts. Three very small, small, and medium piglets sleep on top of the sow lying on her side. There are two piglets sleeping in different positions. The smallest piglet sleeps face down on the topmost breast, while the second piglet clings to her left arm.

The three symbols in the Harmoniest sculpture are the brush, globe and apple. Figure 5 shows the location of each symbol. As her identity as an artist, the brush symbol is always present in most of the sculptures Laksmi makes. As a mother, Laksmi is responsible for introducing the world to her children, as

shown by the globe symbol. The apple is a universal symbol of taste. The sculpture has four pairs of breasts, indicating that Lakshmi had four children.

The harmoniest sculpture is cast in fiberglass and colored in aluminum. Only red color is used in this sculpture. The part of the globe held by the mother pig is the main point of this sculpture. This sculpture uses asymmetrical composition.



Figure. 6 Harmoniest  
(Lakshmi shitaresmi 2012 <https://indoartnow.com/artists/lakshmi-shitaresmi>)

#### d. Four Little Angel

Four Little Angels with Bunny Heads consists of four human figures, as shown in Figure 7. The group of four includes a young rabbit and three smaller rabbits. Next to the young rabbit, who appears to be writing in a book, are three smaller rabbits in various positions. Since the sculpture shows the four children gathering and sharing stories with their younger siblings, Lakshmi named the sculpture The Four Little Angels. Lakshmi was inspired to write this piece when she observed her first child, then her sister, and her three other children, studying in the living room. Observing the behavior of her children - jumping and joking.

Lakshmi imagined cute little bunnies jumping around, and she captured the action. For Lakshmi, even seemingly insignificant moments can have great meaning. The sculpture is made by molding fiberglass. The monochromatic color used is black. The sculpture is stylized as an asymmetrical composition.





Picture. 7 Four Little Angel  
(Lakshmi shitaresmi 2016 <https://indoartnow.com/artists/lakshmi-shitaresmi>)

### 3. Making Technique of Combined Figure Sculpture by Lakshmi Shitaresmi

Lakshmi usually uses two techniques, modeling and casting, to create her sculptures. Lakshmi uses the modeling technique which consists of two stages, namely the procedure of making miniatures using clay materials and the procedure of making a completed model that will be printed using clay materials. These stages are similar to the process of making sculptures in general. Making miniatures out of clay is also a crucial step. Similar to sketching, miniatures serve as the initial building blocks as ideas can be poured directly into their small form.

Although there will still be a process of changing the shape to suit the circumstances later, this miniature remains significant as a foundation because Lakshmi planned the shape carefully according to the concept and attributes to be used.

Modeling is the first step that Lakshmi will take when creating a sculpture. Modeling is the first step in Lakshmi's process before she proceeds with molding to create a composite figure sculpture. Reprinting and defective printing are the printing methods used. The modeling process consists of two steps: small-scale modeling with wax medium and large-scale modeling (also known as print-ready modeling) with clay medium. Preliminary drawings are made through small-scale modeling to determine the composition.

When creating larger models, Lakshmi focuses and concentrates on the initial form, miniatures are used as guidelines. Miniatures are comparable to sketches, the original written record of the initial concept. Sculptors are advised to make miniatures before making larger models. Lakshmi makes her miniatures first, then she shapes them to the desired size. She makes a skeleton of wood and iron before shaping it; rebar is usually used. The model-making process begins after the skeleton is made. If the sculpture has Lakshmi's challenging head shape or anatomical form, she makes bw photos from all possible directions, including front, back, three-quarter, top and bottom views.

Laksmi is a very painstaking person to keep the clay on her models moist. When the model is not being worked on, she covers it with a wet cotton cloth to prevent moisture from seeping in. Laksmi only works with cotton cloth because it absorbs moisture well. She even purposely buys used cotton cloth in bulk for this modeling process. After the model is covered with the cloth, it is then wrapped in plastic.

Buttons are tools used in modeling. The buttons used vary in size; here is an illustration of some that Laksmi used for modeling. Once the modeling is complete, make a negative print by following these steps. Fiber resin is the medium, and fracture printing is the technique. Laksmi reveals that she prefers to use resin media over gypsum media, as resin media gives better results and it is easier to print detailed textures and intricate shapes.

For Laksmi, the most challenging aspect of creating sculptures is figuring out the composition. It takes a lot of effort to create a good composition. Laksmi makes a small clay model first to think about the composition of the form that fits the concept before making a larger clay model.

## **Conclusion**

From the results of the discussion that has been described, it can be concluded that:

### **1. Characteristics of Laksmi Shitairesmi Sculpture**

Mixed figures The most popular type of composite figure is the combination of human and animal figures. Laksmi uses a variety of animal figures, such as buffaloes, pigs, swans, elephants, dogs and rabbits. These animals are chosen by modifying the idea and personality of each of her works. The fact that Lakshmi incorporates many symbols into her composite figure sculptures gives them a visual resemblance to classical sculptures, among other important attributes. A prime example is the classical statue of Lord Ganeśa found in Sumetra. Artists in Indonesia also make extensive use of composite figures; however, Laksmi's use of composite figures sets her apart from other artists' work as the sculptures remain natural in form and the combination of figures is easy to see. Another feature of Laksmi's sculptures is their strong feminine aspect, which is due to the constant inclusion of plant ornaments and breast symbols.

### **2. Shape statue of Laksmi Shitairesmi**

It can be said that Laksmi's sculptures are figurative sculptures, but with figures. In particular, it can be said that Laksmi's sculptures are sculptures of the stocky variety because the forms in them are imaginary forms similar to those in surrealist works. Laksmi's composite figure sculptures are influenced by the surrealist and symbolist artists she idolized, namely Salvador Dali, March Chagall, and Guatave Klimt. Laksmi's sculptures differ from typical figurative sculptures because of their stylistic diversity, as shown by the similarities between her sculptures that combine figurative, symbolic and surrealist forms.

### **3. Laksmi Shitairesmi Sculpture Technique**

Laskmi uses modeling and casting techniques in making her sculptures. Besides fiberglass, Laksmi also uses aluminum and bronze in her molding process, as evidenced by the inclusion of metal printing techniques in her work. Laksmi prints metal using the sand technique. Laksmi's molding process is the same as that of other sculptures; the difference is the way the aluminum is finished, especially the way the aluminum is finished to give color to the sculpture. Laksmi puts her all into making sculptures. She does not think twice about using premium equipment and tools, such as real gold and silver, high-end car paints, and specialized instruments, to help her get the best results..

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