

**NEWS & EVENTS** > Lady Sings the Blues No More - Elida Tamalagi (1981-2011)

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## Lady Sings the Blues No More - Elida Tamalagi (1981-2011)



[caption id="attachment\_5652" align="alignleft" width="218" caption="A

night out at Harbour Square, Manila. (Sept 2010)"]



[/caption]

**Life And Death Via Tweets.** Last 13 September, I stumbled upon a Facebook status update from Bandung filmmaker Muhammad Akbar that stated, "Rest In Peace, Elida Tamalagi dikenal sebagai pendiri KINOKI di Yogyakarta... :(" Roughly translated it means, "Rest In Peace, Elida Tamalagi, better known as the founder and driving spirit of Yogyakarta's KINOKI" -Kinoki being one of the most active alternative art spaces in her hometown, Jogjakarta, a.k.a. the centuries-old "centre of classical Javanese fine art and culture". This sudden piece of news caused shockwaves among the film organizer/activist's wide network of local and international friends from the film, visual arts, literary and music worlds. She was twenty-nine. One friend from Durban, South Africa, Sabelo Kwabena Dlodla, himself a film editor and organizer, expressed, "Sad indeed. We will miss the energy and the happiness expressed by Elida. I had hoped to see her do a Nina Simone karaoke (act)." Yes, the lady known for her electric personality and infectious passion for cinema and the arts, could also belt out the blues as if it was seared on her soul. I first met Elida in December 2007 while doing research on Asian/ASEAN Independent Cinema through an Asia Public Intellectuals Fellowship grant. Despite the fact she only met me via email, she was such a warm and generous host - even allowing me to screen award-winning Cinemalaya shorts in Kinoki. Soon after, she became a regular guest, attending two editions (2009 and 2010), of the Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival.

[caption id="attachment\_5651" align="alignright" width="157"]

caption="Elida flanked by two Baguio-based artists, sipping local wine.

(Feb 2011)"]



[/caption]

**Torn Between Two Homes.** The last time I saw her was in up Baguio City -a relatively cool pine-studded haven in Northern Philippines- late February this year. She was one the several artists featured in a group exhibit called the AX(IS) Art Project held at the Roosevelt Hall of Camp John Hay. But she was so busy setting up her installation we hardly exchanged words. Five months earlier, we had a wilder, San Miguel beer-inspired time at our favorite Baguio hang-out, Rumours Bar. It was then that Elida hinted at the possibility of making a more permanent move to the City of Pines. Like Jogja, Baguio was a laid-back place with a kinetic arts and culture scene. I wasn't surprised at this disclosure. Since then she's shuttled back and forth these two "homes" in the last year and a half. Elida's become such a fixture in the mountain city that, at a much-publicized poetry jam held at the Mt. Cloud bookstore, she crooned her way to bagging the top prize. In Bahasa and French, take note. Now the lady sings the blues no more. This coming Sunday (18 September 2011) an event entitled "Tribute to Elida" will be held at the home of one of her dearest Baguio-based friends, filmmaker Ferdie Balanag.

**Love Through A Blog.** Let me end by quoting in whole a blog written by Indonesian documentary photographer, Budi N.D. Dharmawan, called "[Elida Tamalagi \(1981-2011\)](#)", which goes:

*I lost a friend yesterday. A good, inspiring friend.*

*Patricia Elida Yuliarty Tamalagi, or Elida, was born somewhere in Morowali regency, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, sometime in 1981.*

*I first met her in late 2006 at Kinoki, a small audio-visual interaction platform she established in 2005 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia just next to Yustina Neni's restaurant Kedai Kebun Forum. At that time, Kinoki had moved to Kotabaru area because the original place was damaged after the May 2006 earthquake. They stayed there for a few years, before moving to some other places, and finally had to be dismissed.*

*I was a bit amazed by the way she looked at that time: just got up from bed, in sleeveless shirt, smoking, and a bottle of beer in her hand. It was still early in the afternoon. I thought she was a cold person—you know, the unfriendly kind. But after I got to know her better, it turned out that she was actually a warm person. I also found out later that, that was her style. She drank beer. She smoked. She loved sleeveless shirt.*

*And she hated to get up in the morning. When Maria Tri Sulistyani, or Ria, founder and director of Papermoon Puppet Theatre, got married in one warm noon in June 2007, Elida was there at the church as one of the choir singers, contributing her wonderful voice to the couple. And when not singing, she slept during the whole ceremony. She swore afterward, "Why do you have to get married in the morning?" We laughed.*

*And yes, Elida was also known as a very good singer, which was why Ria asked her to sing at her wedding. She loved slow rock music. Sometimes we went to the karaoke. She rarely gave the microphone up. She just loved to sing. And all that are what we will miss from her. Her dedication to film. Her voice and singing. Her inspiration. Her friendship. Her.*

*Elida fell unconscious on Friday, 9 September 2011, in Salatiga, near Semarang in Central Java. She was then rushed to Bethesda Hospital in Yogyakarta. I heard the news only on Saturday, when a friend posted on Facebook, asking us to pray for her. I didn't realize how bad her condition was until I knew she was in a coma on Sunday. Then on the next day, some said she was already in critical condition.*

*I decided to pay her a visit, but I didn't know where she was taken care of. When I asked some friends, many replied with, "What? What happened?" You didn't hear? "No." Elida is in a coma, I told them. "What? Where?" That's what I'm asking you, damn it....*

*Tuesday morning, 13 September 2011, I was told that Elida was treated in the intensive care unit of Bethesda Hospital. I made an appointment with Ria to visit her together. As I waited for her, I was still sharing stories about Elida with Aisyah Hilal, a friend who is also Elida's senior in French Literature Studies at Gadjah Mada University. Then I checked my Twitter account's timeline. And I was struck by what I read...*

*Elida passed away that Tuesday at about 15.00. She never regained consciousness. Just as we were about to visit her. I called Ria, who was still on her way, to tell the news. After we finally met, we went to the hospital, and spent the rest of the day there.*

*Rest in peace, beloved friend. Never knew you would be gone too soon.*

*Your dedication to film is truly inspiring and greatly treasured. We will stay strong and keep your spirits in our hearts.  
Ciao! See you on the other side!*

*Goodbye, Elida!*

(end of quote)

[caption id="attachment\_5653" align="alignleft" width="126" caption="In Rumours Bar, Baguio City. With the author. (Sept 2010)"]



[/caption]

Ciao, meine crazy friend. Now you sing with the angels!

*(Thank you to Mr. Budi N.D. Dharmawan for allowing us to use his blog. All photos by the author.)*

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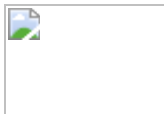
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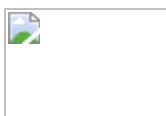
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