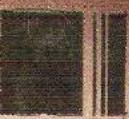
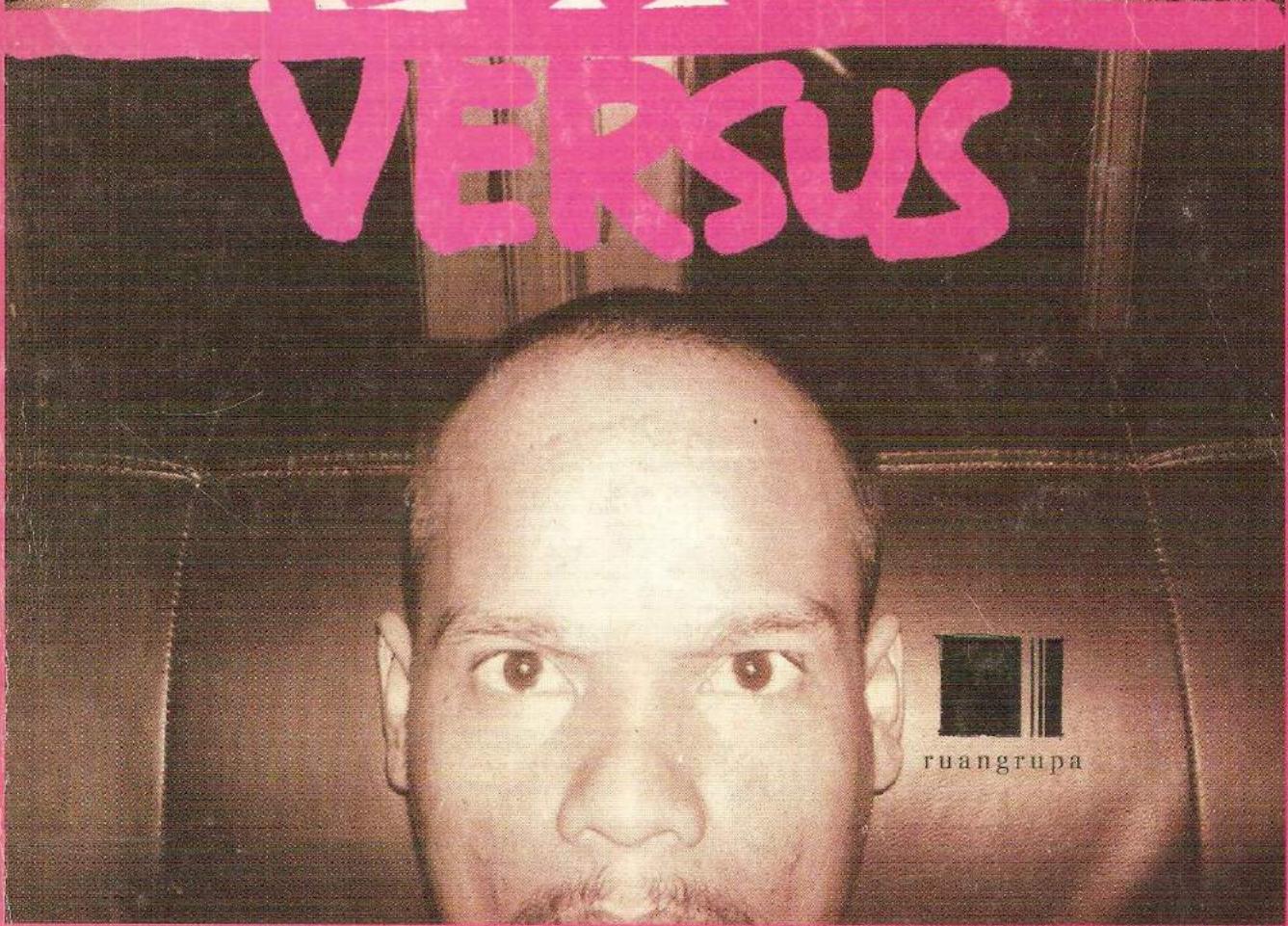


ABSOLUT VERSUS



ruangrupa



By
Ade Darmawan
Hafiz
Reza Afisina
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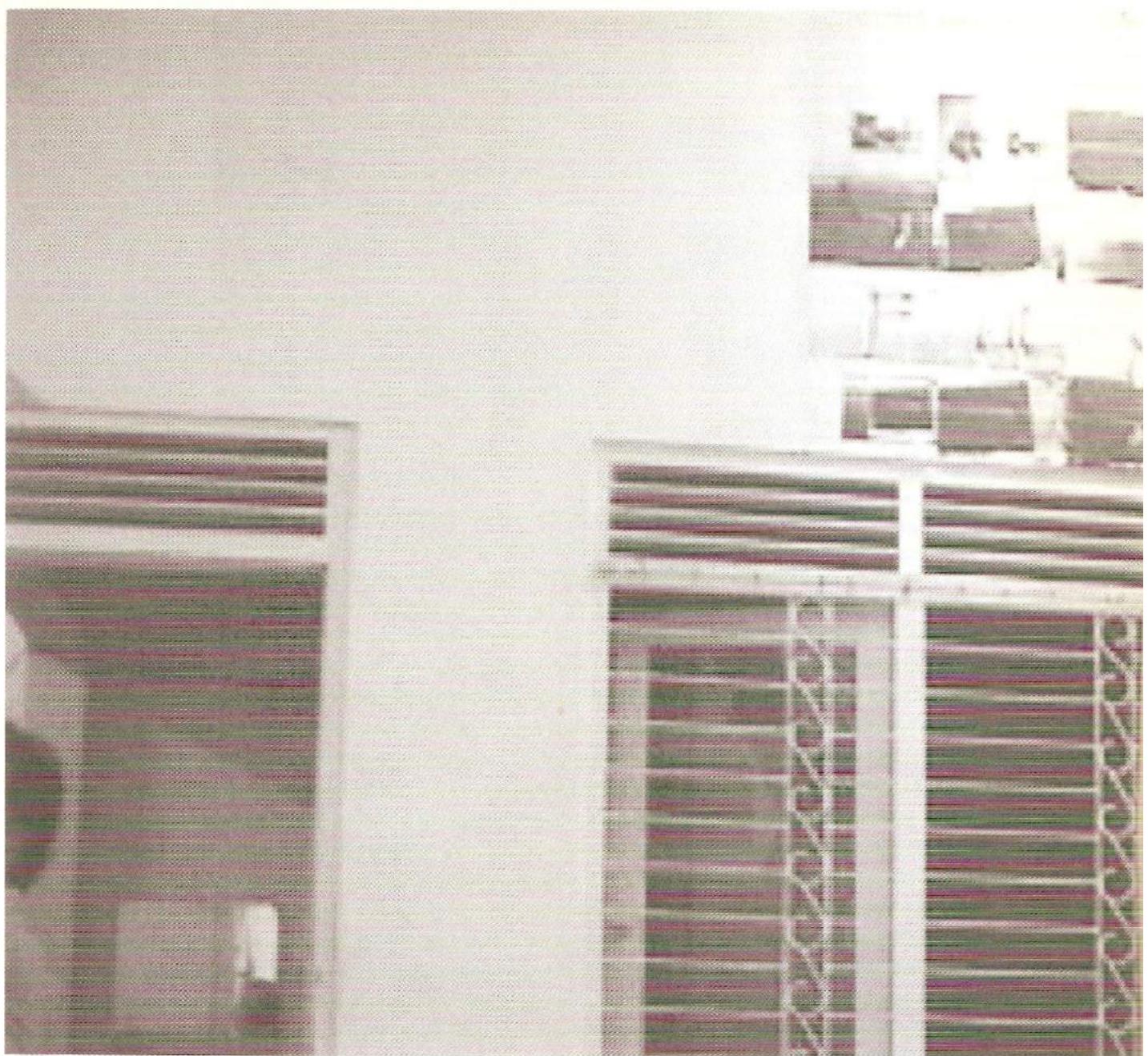
IMAGE BY
Hafiz, Ade Darmawan, Indra Ameng,
Reza Afisina, Ronny, Ugeng T.
Moetidjo, Aditya Satria, Hauritsa,
Yunawantyo, Otty Widasari, Oskart,
Henry Batman.

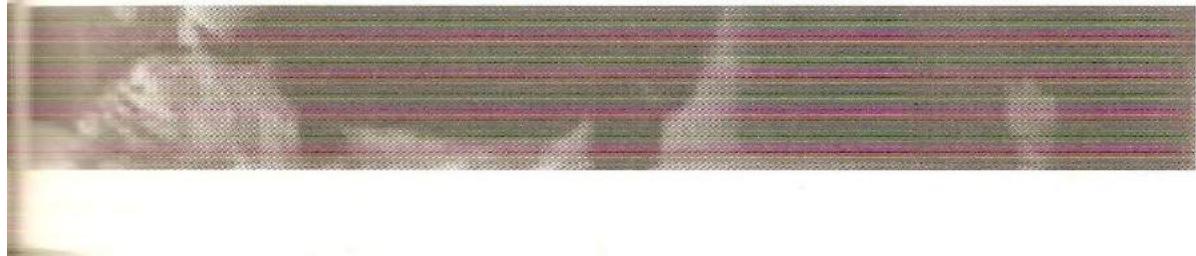
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Hafiz, Ade Darmawan, Indra Ameng,
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Hauritsa, Lilia Nursita, Elim , Oskart,
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Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten
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TRANSLATION
Amanda Katherine Rath

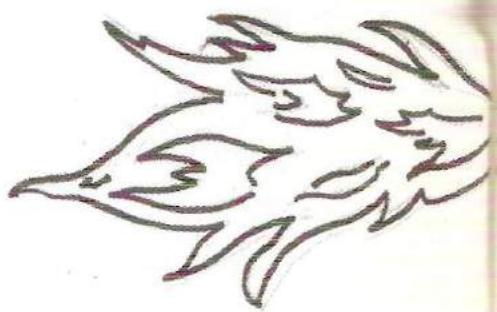
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Artists Initiatives Network



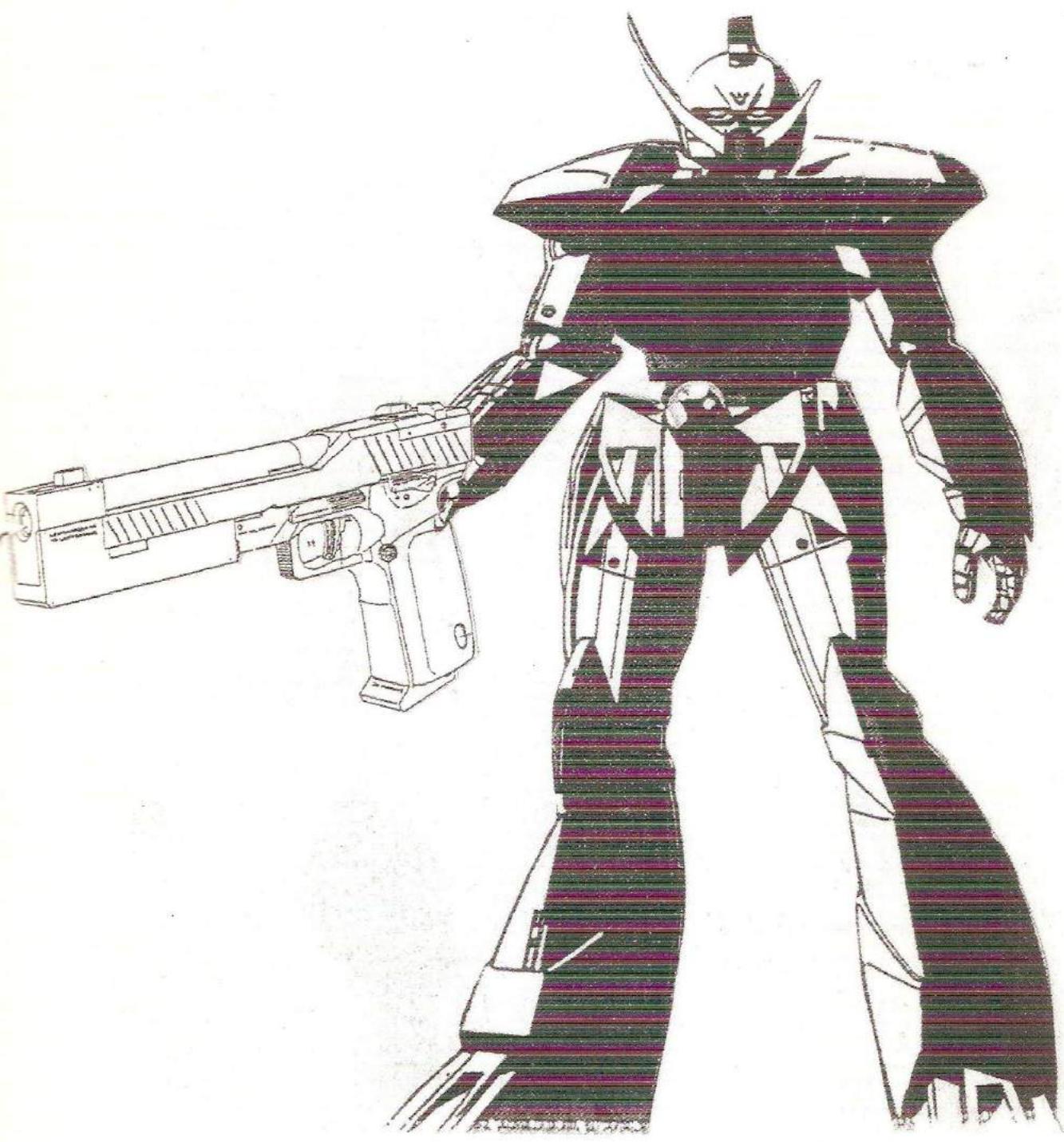


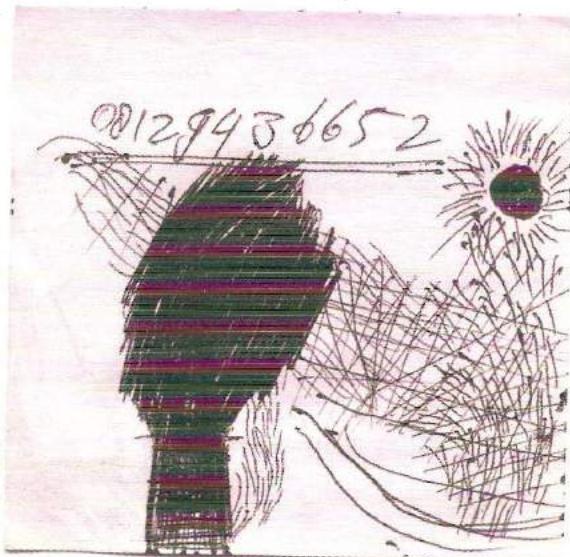
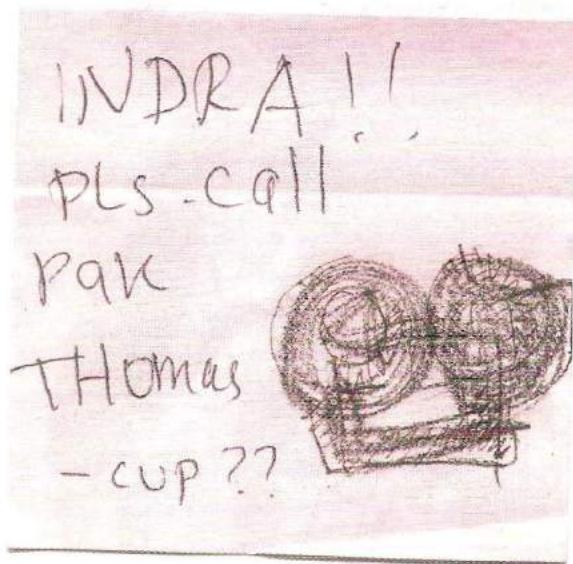


**THE FUTURE
HAS BEEN
SOLD.**



■ sabda saya indra ameng





The ground control... dear Bastard...

In every opening at an art space in Jakarta - usually it's a gallery with exotic decoration or a big huge beautiful colonial building - ...there is one thing that always so impressed me is when everybody couldn't perform one of the civilized life style called 'standing party' After one hour people will just sit down on the floor at some 'cozy' spot , after some boring opening speech, after got a glass of beer, wine or just cup of tea...smoking and drinking, talking and laughing, and they will feel like they are sitting in the biggest astray in the world...even its in space with air conditioning It's a free country!

Garbage and all the dirt in the ground is actually part of the relation between the body and the ground ...relation between the body and the object socially, culturally, historically

The relation between the paragraph above and below is just because they are in the same page...

I mean this network is not gonna end up with new imperialism, by sending some artist to other countries...but this consciousness also confronted with the artist' tendencies to go abroad or to become international artist.... It's very important for the carrier, to be an international... even the show its more important than the everyday life experiences ... a new set up have to be made... artist is not an athletes, or underpaid slave of Nike factory...

We are not gonna invite artist from outside Indonesia just to come to Jakarta become an intruder and again rob something in the name of....

money problems for art project always interesting, some artist could survive because they are really good being 'professional artist' - in making a proposal, networking, presenting etc. but some artist they just don't know how to deal with that kind of things or the system doesn't exist, most of the time we should do the 'form follow finances' as well....ha ha ha ...have to be very flexible on money problems..... I start to think to make a manual book for the artist here about getting some money for their projects ... "chicken soup for the artists' soul" ...could be interesting....or to make an exhibition on project proposal made by artists, curators, and organizers....

I really agree with my friend Ronny , that artist here should see public as collection of individual with personal history, consciousness, etc , and not as an anonymous entity...so the approach should be more intimate and personal...I think we should learn more from traditional artist here in Indonesia...

...there is no 'center figure'try to keep this atmosphere-...and try to be more 'fluid'...

the suggestions sound very interesting, about daily life and try to find the hidden structure the behavior and interactions between the people...

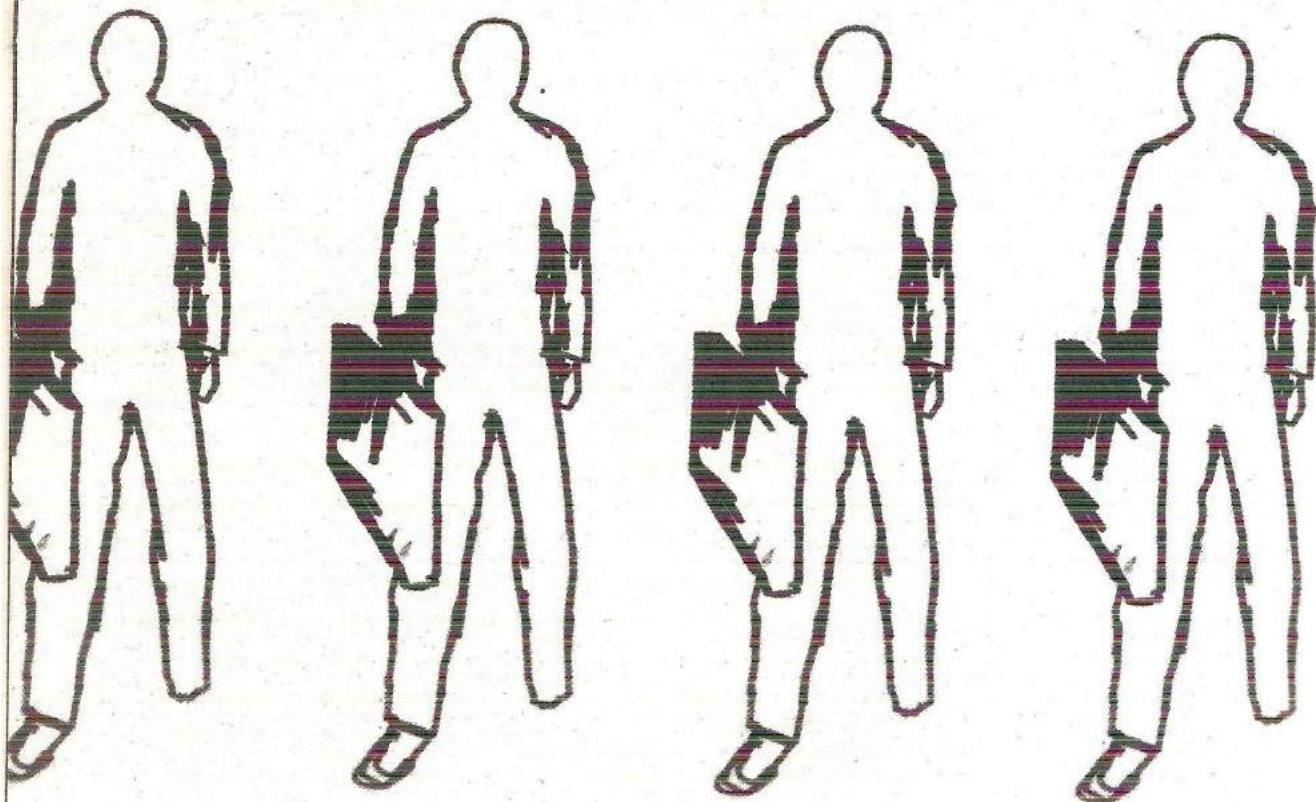
it takes a week for the body and blood to get used to the different climate,

we need your CV as soon as possible for our project proposal...

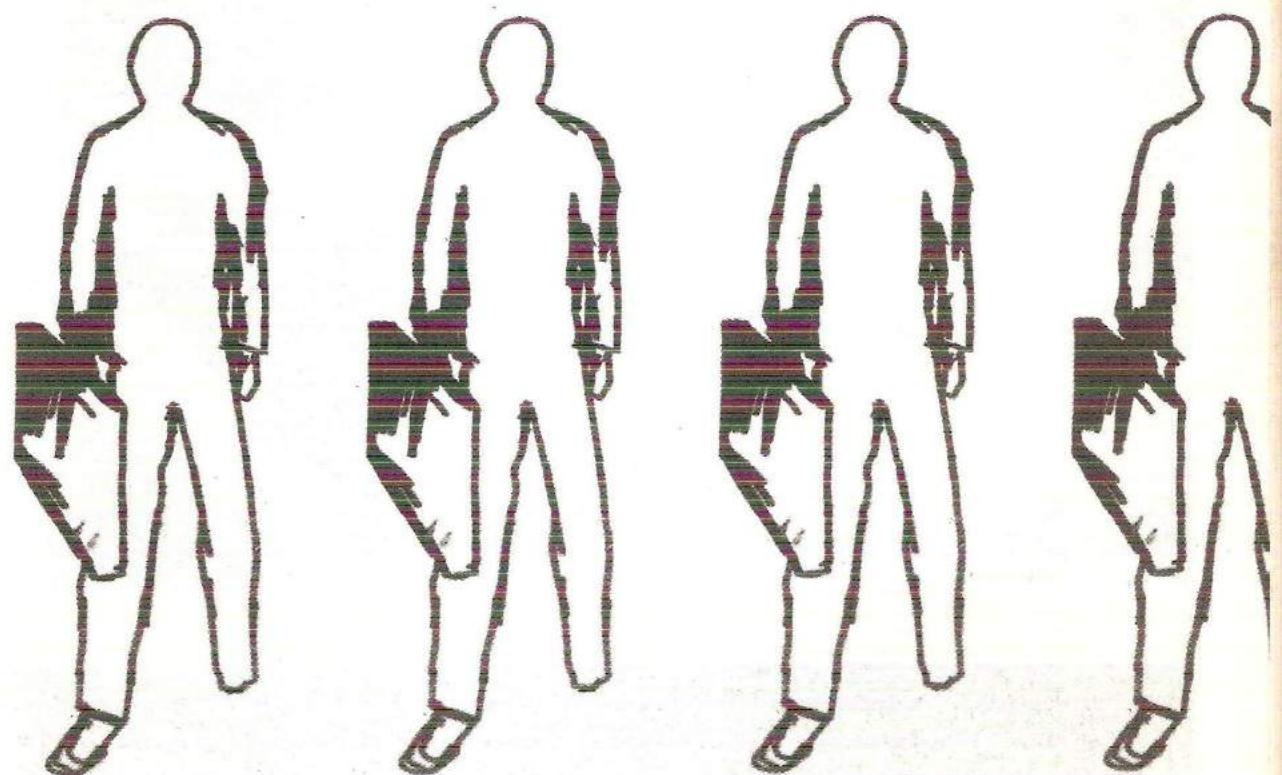
Back to work, hope to hear from you soon.

Big kiss from Ade Darmawan> 180302

"if you then, who are
give good gifts



... will, know how to
your children, . . . "



■ sabda saya **reza afisina**



By
Ade Darmawan
Hafiz
Reza Afisina
Indra Ameng
Aditya Satria
Irwan Ahmett
Ronny Agustius

I'm not here. —)))))))0(((((((and you ***** — (((((
⑦ >>>>> you'll be there...adfasdfhlkhjas oiuwertoij

<<<<< me...you ...them ++++++ ++++++ ++++++ ++++++

+++++ ++++++ ++++++ ++++++ ++++++ ++++++ ++++++ ++++++

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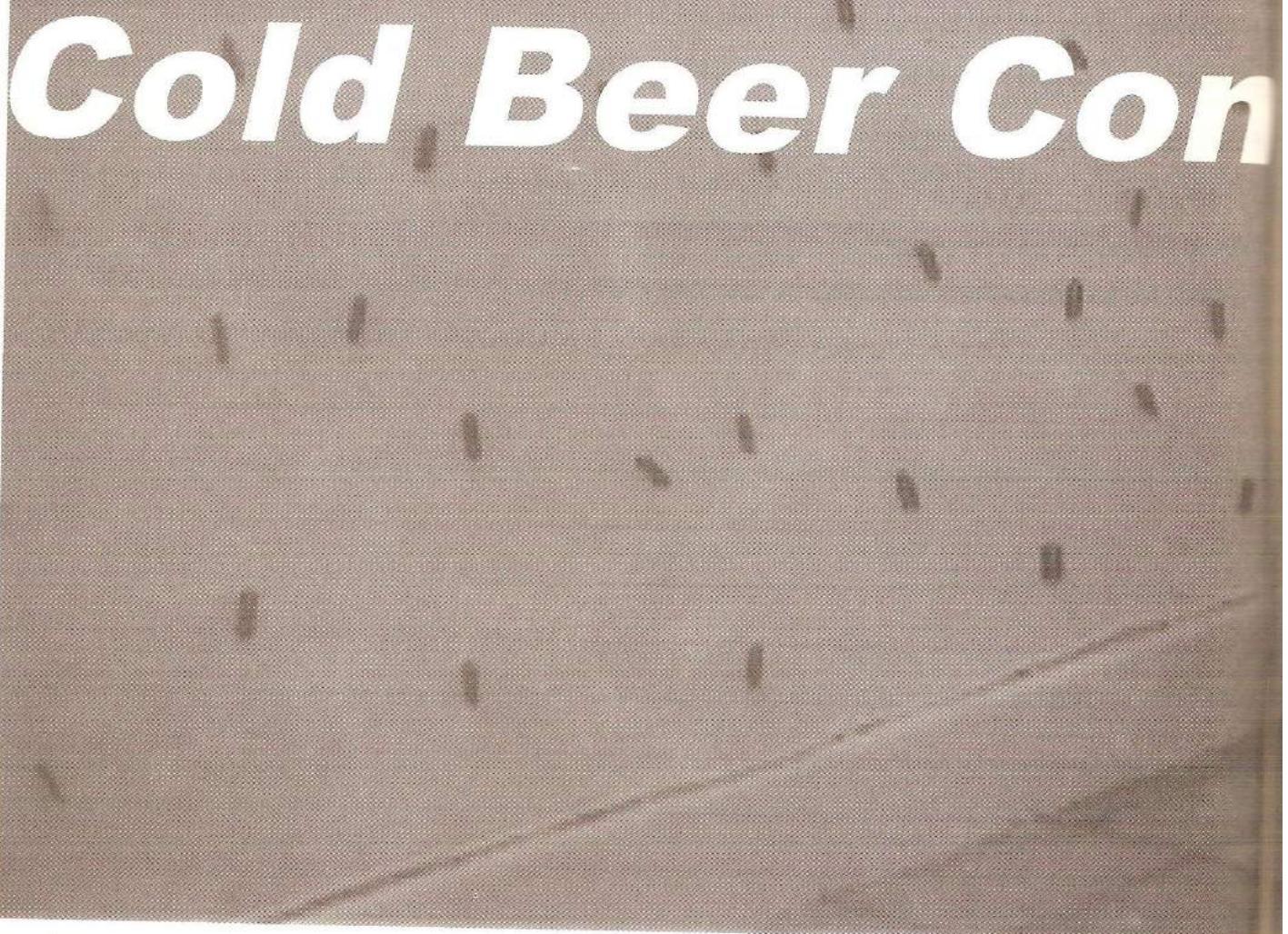
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cigarette and



Cold Beer Con



versation, dan **Tiga Tahun Sesudahnya**

"(...) Sedikit sekali seniman-seniman yang ingin dan dapat menghirup "udara metropolis" Jakarta. Baginya, Jakarta hanyalah shelter atau semacam ruang yang dapat ditempati tanpa perlu mengetahui dan memahami ruang itu sendiri. Akhirnya, terjadi kekacauan. Jakarta sebagai tempat utama dalam mengembangkan proses perjalanan kesenian secara lebih luas lagi (bukan nilai komersial) menjadi gagap dalam membentuk diri (...) Seniman-seniman Jakarta adalah komunitas yang sangat heterogen. Baik dari asal-usul keberadaan, sikap, tabiat, memandang, konsep dll. Bagiku itu baik dan tidak baik. Baik karena adanya kebebasan untuk bertindak sebagai individu, tidak baik karena menurut pandanganku, mereka "memanfaatkan" Jakarta. Kelompok-kelompok yang ada di Jakarta (yang lepas maupun terikat) tidak lebih dari kumpulan orang-orang yang ingin memanfaatkan situasi. (...) Buatku, mental seperti inilah yang akhirnya membuat pergerakan Jakarta tidak dapat dilacak dan berkembang. Hampir semua institusi seni di Jakarta selalu ingin mengejar kedudukan (senimannya, pejabat kesenian, kritikusnya, dll). Bagiku, tugas seorang pelukis adalah melukis dan mempresentasikan hasil kerjanya ke masyarakat sebagai pertanggung-jawaban yang mutlak.

(...) Nah!, kalau bicara tentang seni

penyadaran yang sekarang luar biasanya ditampilkan dengan menggebu-gebu oleh sebagian besar seniman, tidak perlu kau harus mempercayainya: Masalahnya bukan percaya atau tidak, tapi paling tidak kalau kau membaca tulisanku di atas tadi, tentu kau tahu bagaimana harus bersikap. Mereka ini gagap dan tiba-tiba ingin menjadi "ujung tombak palsu" dari perubahan suasana ini. Itu semua menjadi "topeng" keadaan. Dan lagi-lagi, mereka terjebak suasana. Kepada mereka, apakah aku harus bicara persoalan percaya atau tidak percaya? Tidak !!!

(...) Maaf, aku tidak ingin bicara sekasar ini. Dan tentu juga aku tidak dapat menyalahkan praktisi senimannya seratus persen. Ini bisa dibilang adalah sebuah siklus yang saling isi mengisi dalam keburukan.

Tugas kitalah memutuskan rantai siklus yang kacau itu. "

SURAT PANJANG DI ATAS (yang lebih panjang lagi sebelum diedit) ditulis oleh seorang pelukis, Oky Arfie Hutabarat, tanggal 10 Mei 1999, dalam diskusi lewat e-mail bersama Ade Darmawan (perupa yang saat itu berada di Belanda), Hafiz (perupa di Jakarta), Ade Tanesia (redaktur Aikon Yogyakarta) dan saya sendiri. Diskusi ini, yang kemudian berkembang melibatkan hampir 20 orang peserta (meski kebanyakan pasif) dan pembicaraan yang melantur ke mana-mana (dari es teh sampai *Situationist International*), bisa disebut sebagai cikal bakal terggasnya sebuah keinginan membentuk wadah kesenian yang "berbeda". Akhir 1999, sepulang Ade dari Belanda, diskusi ruang maya itu dikonkretkan dengan tatap muka, bersama bir dan wine, antara keenam orang "terpilih". Tak lama, awal 2000, RuangRupa berdiri (lengkap dengan akta notaris dan logo yang absurd). Tanpa merujuk langsung pada surat yang ditulis Oky, bisa disebutkan pada prinsipnya platform kerja RuangRupa digagas untuk tak jauh berkisar dari persoalan "urban", Jakarta khususnya, tanpa sekadar menganggapnya sebagai "semacam ruang yang dapat ditempati tanpa perlu mengetahui dan memahami ruang itu sendiri"; karenanya, "tugas kitalah memutuskan rantai siklus yang kacau itu". Meski

pada prosesnya tak berjalan seheroik kalimat terakhir surat Oky tadi, setelah dua tahun, barangkali perlulah untuk mengkritisi kembali apa itu "ruang" dan apa itu "tugas kesenian" dalam anggapan kami.

Kami? Tunggu dulu. Kata itu cukup berbahaya sebenarnya untuk merumuskan apa yang dikerjakan RuangRupa. Dari mula, kami, eh maaf—"orang-orang yang mendirikannya", memutuskan untuk tidak melebur segala perbedaan individu dan mengubahnya jadi suatu "kerja komunal". Bahkan masih lekat di ingatan, debat dan percekcikan awal yang sempat membuat panas suasana kafe tempat orang-orang yang mendirikannya ini berdiskusi. Selain keenam orang pendiri tersebut (yang waktu itu ada yang bekerja di sebuah majalah ekonomi-politik yang hampir bangkrut –dan kini memang bangkrut—, di perusahaan hiburan, perusahaan ayam potong, dan pabrik otomotif), RuangRupa akhirnya menambah seorang pelukis-penulis dengan tugas khusus menangani jurnal. Setahun terakhir ini, silih gantilah rekan-rekan yang berkarya di sana, yang jumlah jam kerja dan jasanya di RuangRupa jauh melebihi sebagian pendiri yang belakangan justru tak aktif. Saya sendiri misalnya, barangkali adalah orang yang kehadirannya secara fisik paling sedikit di RuangRupa.



Dengan semua beda itu, "kami" menjadi riskan dan tak memadai. Apalagi dari awal Oky pernah menyebut "kebebasan untuk bertindak sebagai individu" (e-mail tanggal 10 Mei 1999 di atas), Ade pernah berkata "justru harus subjectif en membuat sebuah karya jadi sangat menarik en banyak membuka lapisan baru..." (e-mail tanggal 10 Mei 1999 juga), dan Hafiz pernah mempermasalahkan "keharusan-keharusan yang selama ini menjadi ukuran publik dalam kesenian" (e-mail tanggal 23 Desember 1999).

'Publik' kontra 'individu', 'kami/kita' kontra 'saya' : soal-soal klasik yang tak pernah selesai dalam debat seni modern Indonesia semenjak 'si jalang' dari 'kumpulannya' terbuang. Tapi tampaknya, di RuangRupa, orang-orang yang berkecimpung di dalamnya lebih mengambil sikap dan berpihak pada soal 'saya', 'individu'. Mengapa? Saya tak

tahu kawan-kawan lainnya, tapi pada tataran filosofis, saya pribadi memandang "kami" bukanlah obat yang serta merta mujarab untuk menyembuhkan individualisme dan oposisi biner 'saya-orang lain' yang dihadirkan oleh modernisme, kalaupun modernisme mesti dipandang sebagai patologi sosial. Sebab, mentalitas hirarkis yang dikandung dalam oposisi biner itu belum tentu bisa langsung pupus dengan membawa satuan-satuan diri ke dalam cakupan yang lebih luas, "saya" menuju "kami", individu menuju kelompok, seniman perorangan menuju komunitas seni. Hirarki superior-inferior seakan telah jadi laten di negeri ini, betapapun dikabarkan kita sedang menjalani proses demokratisasi yang menyelewuh. Bahkan, sepertinya banyak yang merasa lebih nyaman hidup dalam hirarki macam itu. Misalnya, pernah datang ke RuangRupa dua orang pelukis membawa proposal pengajuan rencana pameran lengkap dengan rincian dananya sekaligus. Hafiz menolaknya tegas waktu itu (memangnya Ruang-Rupa ini galeri, funding, departemen, atau apaan?), dengan penjelasan bahwa RuangRupa adalah organisasi –*artist initiative* istilahnya—yang menyediakan bengkel kerja, juga peralatan (tak banyak), yang memungkinkan 'saya' dan 'Anda' sebagai individu yang berdiri sendiri dan berdiri sejajar saling bertemu, berdebat, dan berkarya menurut keyakinan masing-masing. Ketika seni dimaknai sebagai proses dan interaksi gagasan, maka hasil akhir berpameran, bahkan karya jadi sekalipun, bukanlah tujuan utama. Tapi dua pelukis ini justru terlihat jengah dengan tawaran berkarya yang demikian leluasa. Tampaknya, mereka lebih suka memerlukan lakon pencari kerja yang menenteng-nenteng CV dan ijazah, mempertontonkan mentalitas inferiornya di penjelang tahta pemilik galeri, segagah apapun tematik

karya yang mereka buat.

Itu satu contoh. Contoh lainnya yang menyangkut mentalitas superior bisa dilihat pada apa yang sesungguhnya terjadi dalam praksis 'seni penyadaran'. Pertanyaannya: siapa yang harus disadarkan? Jelas: rakyat, buruh, petani, kaum miskin, kaum tertindas, dsb. Siapa yang menyadarkan? Jawabannya jelas juga: seniman. Hirarki superioritas ini terpampang terang benderang di depan mata, meski 'seni penyadaran' seringkali membusungkan istilah-istilah rumit seperti 'keterlibatan massa', 'karya komunal', dsb. Mengapa seniman harus melibatkan kaum tertindas dalam proyek artistiknya demi membuat mereka sadar? Mengapa tidak sebaliknya? Misalnya, petani menyuruh seniman menanggalkan privilesinya dan bangun dari subuh mencangkul, membajak, mena-nam, tanpa masuk koran atau diliput media, tanpa kesempatan di-'video art'-kan, tanpa Philip Morris Award, Nokia Art Award, Tetek Bengek Award apapun, dan begitu terus sampai musim panen tiba dan berulang selama, katakanlah, sepuluh tahun, demi membuat seniman-seniman itu "sadar" akan pahit manisnya keadaan yang sesungguhnya. Hirarki 'seni penyadaran' bukan cuma menganggap seniman sebagai "kaum yang sudah tercerahkan" dan petani sebagai "kaum yang belum tercerahkan", tapi sekaligus juga membawa konsekuensi "seni" sebagai bidang kehidupan yang lebih tinggi tingkatnya dibanding "bertani". Barangkali si petani memang tak tahu apa-apa soal revolusi sosialis atau mural perjuangan kelas Rivera, tapi apa yang si seniman ketahui soal bibit, pupuk, hama, musim panen, tengkulak? Dua tataran kesadaran ini harus disadari benar perbedaannya sekaligus kesejarahannya kalau sebuah partisipasi demokratis yang sejati memang hendak ditumbuhkan. Dan inilah kritik

I'M NOT HIS SPERM

VER.5.7

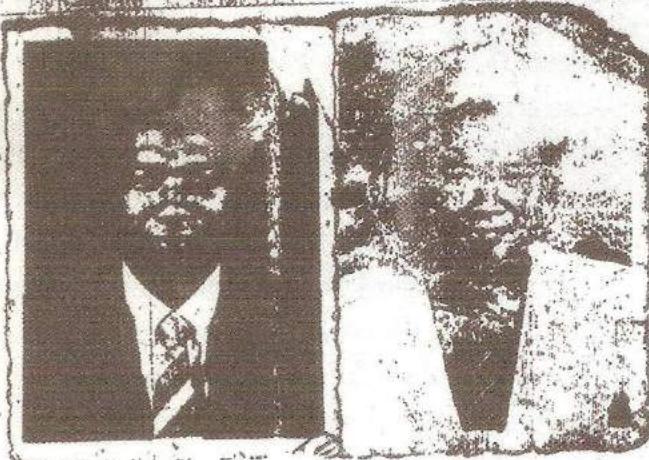
1994

1988



"the father":

the man who's legally in law
to put his ten inches into
your sweaty-trap mom
(you usually called like that!)
and after for about ten
to 15 mnts ejaculated hi
bio lust chemicals salty protein
with no warning, no pro
tection, swim to unvirgi
(since high school !) vagi
and in the right birthday
another human complex
raise it, but these man
never ejaculated for
me... to make me !!



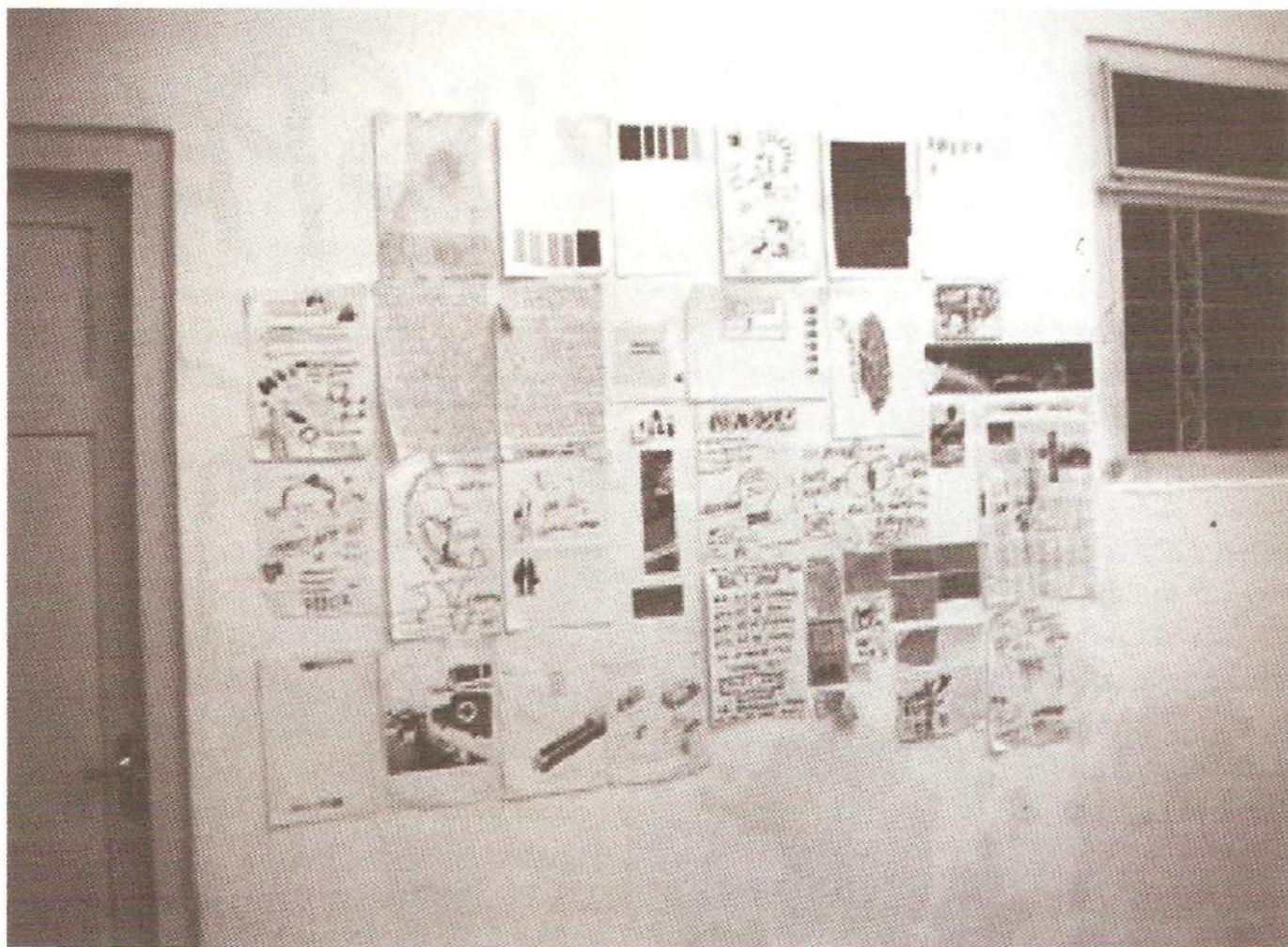
colony 2013

my mother's
affair

continue...

THE ANSWER:

"my mom, fuck another man first and then her husband"
unprotected and after that she fucked his best friend"



terhadap komunitas-komunitas seni yang dengan pandangan hitam-putih atas modernisme kerapkali menghasilkan solusi gampongan “karya komunal” versus “karya individual”, dengan amat mengabaikan persoalan mental yang melandasi keduanya serta merancukan beda antara indivi-dualisme dan egoisme.

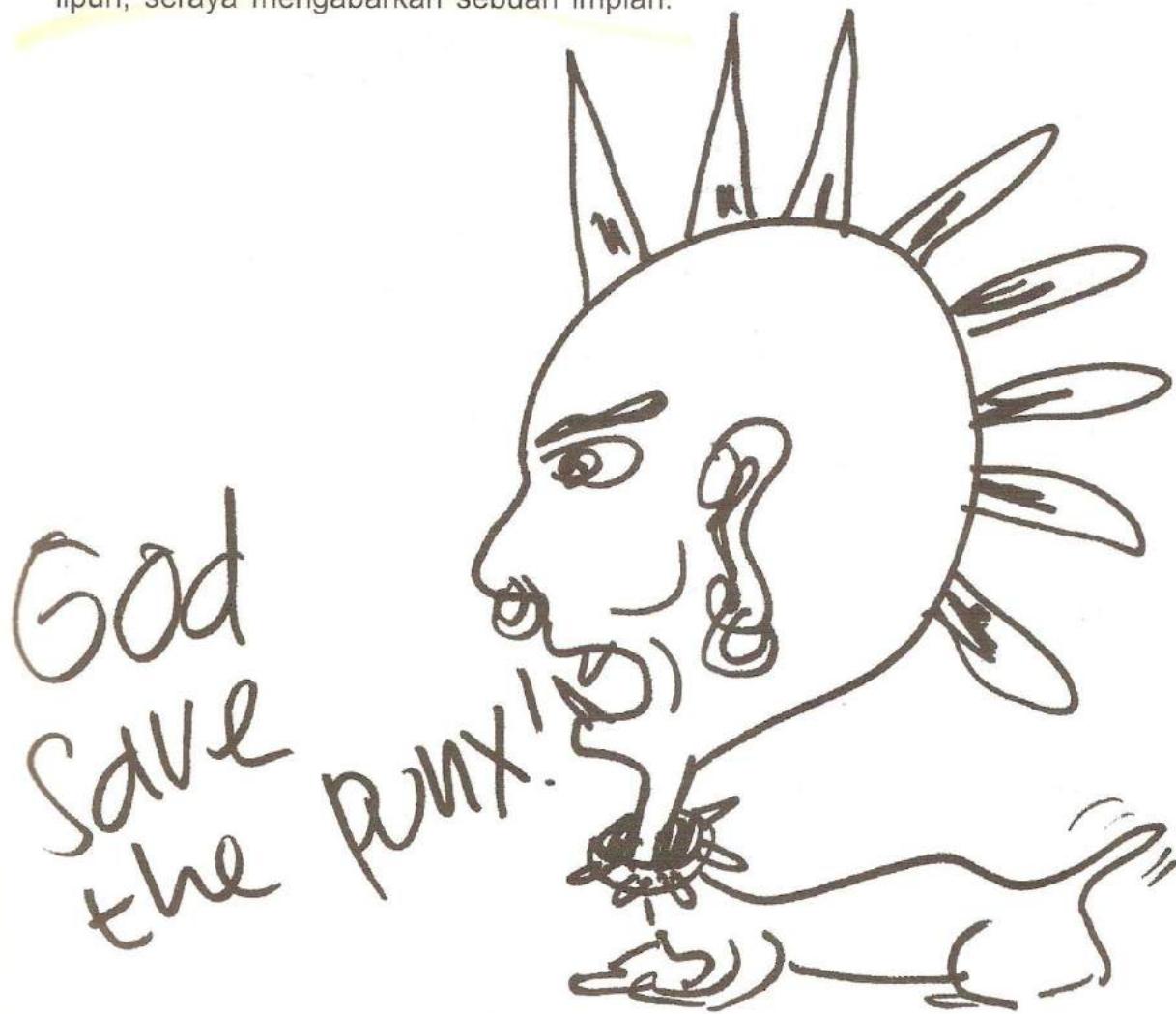
Proyek RuangRupa, termasuk untuk Gwangju Bienalle ini, dengan demikian bukanlah karya “kami”, tapi karya “banyak saya”. Namun, meski RuangRupa memihak ‘saya’, tidak serta merta ia lantas memihak ‘urban’. (Ya, dalam kamus *fashion* mutakhir, para pendukung ‘kami’ biasa diidentikkan dengan ‘tradisi, desa, harmoni, seni untuk rakyat – dan karenanya... proletar-progresif [?]’, dan pendukung ‘saya’ identik dengan ‘modernitas, urban, fragmentasi, seni untuk

seni – dan karenanya: borjuis-dekaden’ [parah!]). RuangRupa ingin melihat urban sebagai ruang yang, mau tidak mau, harus dihidupi sambil terus dikritisi dengan sama intensnya. Urban bukan penyakit, meski bo-peng sana sini, bukan pula dewa penolong, meski terus memikat datangnya pencari kerja dalam migrasi tahunan pasca-Lebaran. Mereka yang ingin membendung arus urbanisasi dengan menyuguhkan imaji tentang “kota yang rusak” dan “desa yang tentram” sebenarnya cuma bermain-main di taraf mitos, sama sekali tidak menyentuh realita. Mengulang apa yang pernah saya tulis setahun lalu di jurnal kebudayaan *Mitra*: “Tak perlu disangkal, bayangan kita tentang desa adat yang tentram dan cerita-cerita rakyat mereka yang arif dan bijak adalah kompensasi romantis dari dunia kota kita sendiri yang telah rusak...”.

Dalam seni rupa, tulang-tulang beton saling silang dan koboi-koboi papan reklame Marlboro Country yang memenuhi kanvas hanyalah pantulan terbalik dari kerangka berpikir trimurti Mooi Indie "gunung, kelapa, dan sawah" yang masih sama. Sama bebalnya seperti film-film Indonesia tahun '70-an sampai sinetron-sinetron zaman sekarang yang terus menggambarkan Jakarta dengan cara seperti ini: lalu lintas riuh, tugu Monas, bundaran HI, gedung-gedung, lampu-lampu jalan malam hari, kerlap-kerlip pusat keramaian, kafe, diskotik, musik hingar bingar. Gambaran itu adalah pemenuhan suka cita dan pengakuan dosa sekaligus. Di satu sisi, glamor itu adalah pusat kebejatan yang harus dicaci, dan di sisi lain, ia mesti terus ditayangkan tanpa kenal lelah lewat pemancar-pemancar teve ke seluruh pelosok yang paling terpencil sekali pun, seraya mengabarkan sebuah impian:

"inilah hidup yang sesungguhnya, kemari lah...". Dengan begini, stereotipe, juga hipokrisi, makin dikukuhkan. Upaya memutus hirarki pusat-marjinal justru berbalik meneguhkan kuasanya. Urban, sang pusat, akhirnya terus dimaki sambil diam-diam dingini, atau versi lain Ade Darmawan dalam e-mail tanggal 2 Juni 1999: "...Kenapa seniman lebih bangga pameran di luar negeri (meski negerinya terpencil) daripada pameran di Indonesia (Banjarmasin misalnya)?"

Jelas, RuangRupa tak hendak tunduk pada stereotip maupun hipokrisi, tapi untuk itu definisi tentang urban harus dijawab terlebih dulu. Meski tak ada jawaban seragam, saya akan bilang bahwa urban adalah "tempat orang menghabiskan sekian lembar halaman koran demi debat basi antara wacana pasar



dan pasar wacana seni rupa Indonesia, se-mentara harga beras di pasar tradisional jadi lebih mahal ketimbang pasar swalayan, meskipun saya masih bisa menemukan CD langka The Clash di pasar loak, sambil para aktivis kiri sibuk membikin risalah anti pasar bebas, tepat saat indeks pasar saham naik satu setengah poin". Suka atau tak suka, urban adalah keriuhan pasar, orang-ramai berjubelan dalam kapitalisme segala-ada. Ya, pasar: seperti seks, ia kerap dipandang sebagai semacam dosa sembari diakui sebagai penggerak terbesar peradaban manusia. Kita sering mendengar, malah mungkin berucap: "Pasar itu menjajah! Pasar itu menundukkan!"

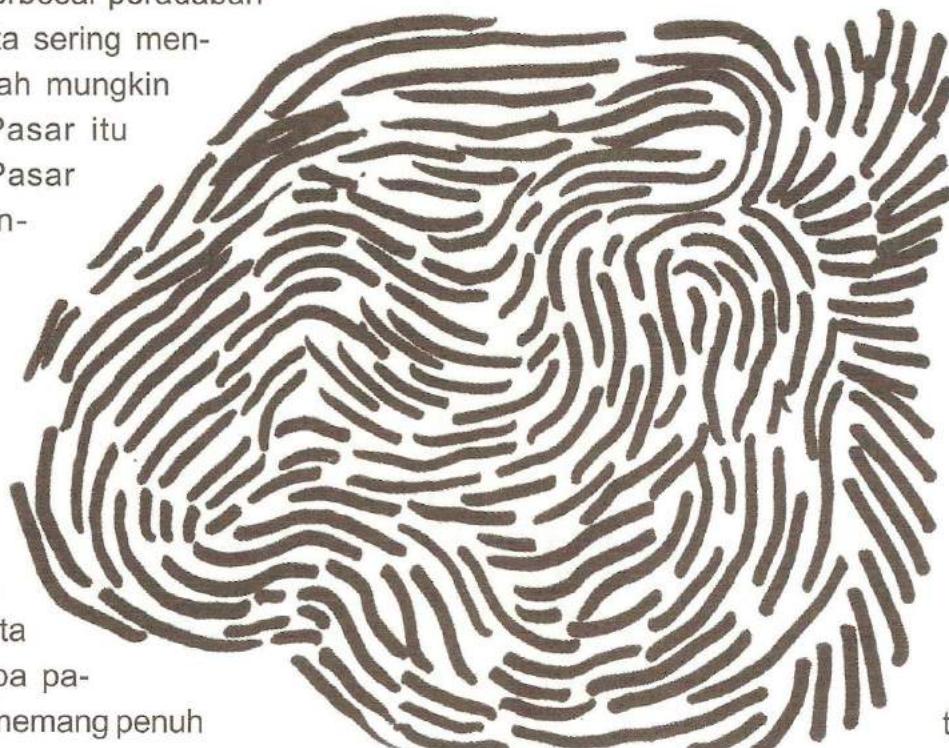
Pasar itu meng-alienasi!" dan kali lain kita bertanya sendiri: "Apa yang bisa kita perbuat tanpa pasar?" Pasar memang penuh masalah, tapi menjadi pertapa

romantis yang lari mencari keteduhan atas angin, tempat yang seakan-bukan-pasar, dan di sana hidup sambil mencemooh kerja orang-ramai itu sama sekali bukan jawaban (sebenarnya, dengan pengalaman 'bekerja' orang bisa lebih tahu apa yang sesungguhnya terjadi di dunia orang-upahan). Herannya, di zaman yang makin uzur ini masih saja ada banyak orang yang gemar mendikotomi persoalan urban ini dengan begitu hitam putihnya. Saya ingin menyarankan agar kita meluangkan

waktu banyak-banyak menonton film Wong Kar-Wai. Di situ, Hongkong atau Kowloon digambarkan semrawut sesuai realitanya, tapi ia tidak dipandang secara ilmu sosial atau ideologi yang bernafsu mengobjektifkan dan mendikotomi segala realitas hidup. Tokoh-tokoh di film Wong Kar-Wai punya sikap dan pandangannya sendiri yang personal-otentik dalam menangani problem-problem mereka di lingkup sosial urban, biarpun yang mereka perbuat cuma tindakan dan percakapan remeh yang seakan tanpa makna. Mereka tidak

mengakukan aksi-aksi heroik mogok makan atau bom bunuh diri, tapi juga tak ingin tunduk pada situasi yang meneilikung hasrat mereka. Seperti mereka, seni yang sejati akan senantiasa berada dalam tegangan

kedua kubu, antara narasi besar realitas-sosial dan narasi kecil otentisitas-personal. Orang-orang yang gemar mengecam modernisme dan kapitalisme dalam semua aspek sosial-ekonomi-politiknya —para pecandu posmodernisme itu—seringkali lupa bahwa posmodernisme bermula dari keinginan untuk menguak hikayat-hikayat tersembunyi, sejarah-sejarah perorangan, kisah-kisah kecil dan remeh, yang telah tertutup oleh arahan seragam dari proyek raksasa modernisme.



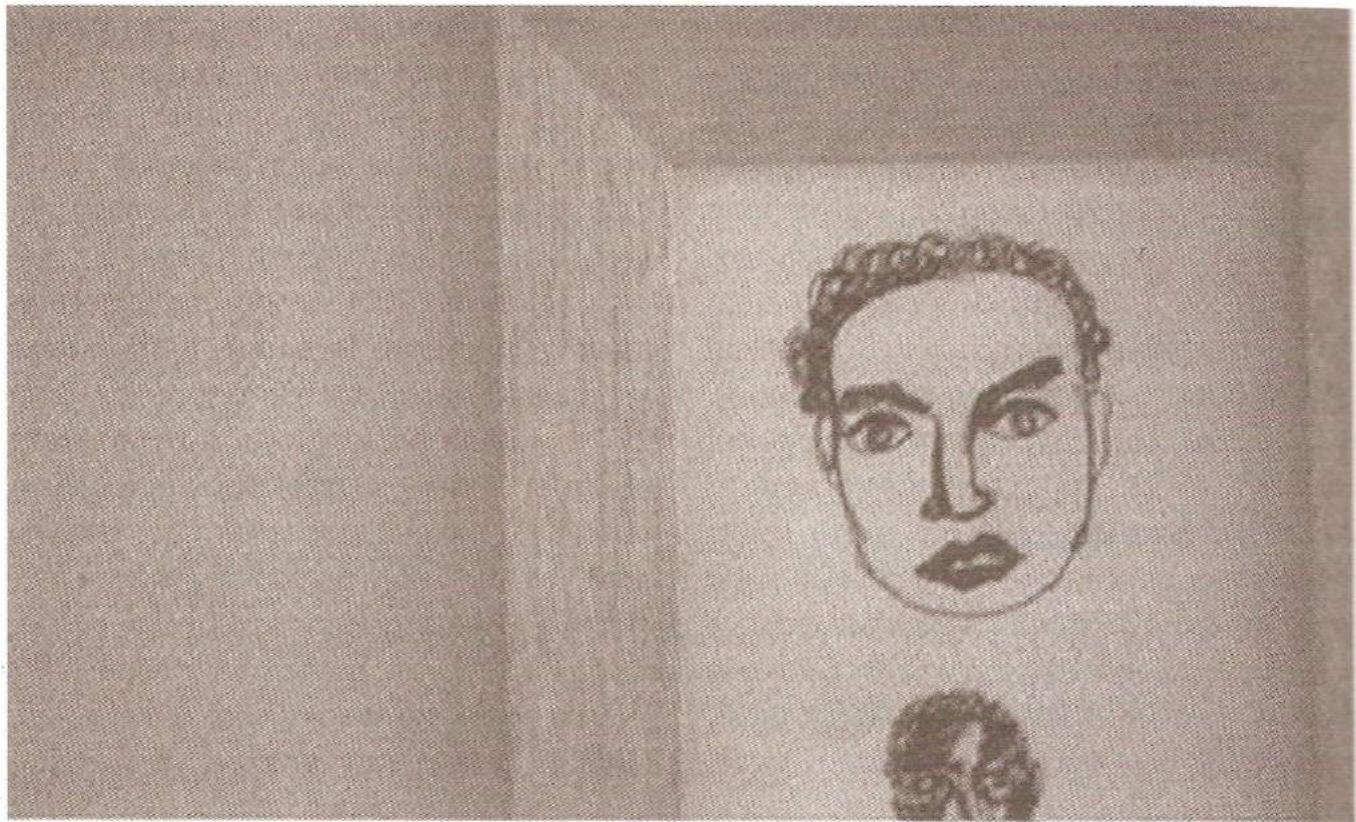
Tapi yang terjadi kemudian malah perulangan. Wacana posmodernisme ikut pula merak-sasa, menerobos masuk ke halaman-halaman jurnal dengan kutipan-kutipan panjang nan rumit dan catatan kaki yang berjubel (dengan rujukan ke orang yang itu-itu juga: Baudrillard, Foucault, Said, Derrida, dll—saya jadi ingat Ade, yang ingin mengutip Tatang S., komikus Petruk Gareng, untuk katalogus pamerannya), kajian-kajian kebudayaan yang mengglobal dan jadi sama *mainstream*-nya seperti developmentalisme '80-an, serta riset-dokumenter antropologis yang dibiayai firma kapitalis internasional. Lalu apa sesungguhnya yang membedakan Terompet Rakyat dengan baliho-baliho Orde Baru? Lagi-lagi pantulan terbalik dari cara berpikir yang masih sama: narasi besar politik dibalas dengan narasi besar politik, seakan lupa bahwa sejarah pada dasarnya adalah aliran darah dan ingatan yang bersendiri, seakan lupa bahwa jauh-jauh hari sejarawan Sartono Kartodirdjo telah menggugat: di mana catatan hidup sehari-hari umat manusia yang tidak terkait peristiwa-peristiwa besar?

Hikayat tak terlihat, sejarah perorangan, kisah-kisah kecil dan remeh: itu sebabnya Hafiz sering merisaukan "hal-hal tersembunyi", dan saya pernah diskusi dengan Oky tentang "perlunya kita melukis kembali alam benda dan bunga-bunga, dengan tujuan dan pemaknaan yang berbeda tentunya", lalu Ade menimpali dengan contoh seorang rekannya dari sebuah negeri di Eropa Timur tempat "bunga dan abstraksi adalah politik", sehingga "gue pikir mungkin aja melukis alam benda en bunga-bunga bisa dilihat menjadi sebuah perlawan, tapi yang beli entar malah istrinya Habibie lagi hihih..." (e-mail 21 Juli 1999). Saya akhirnya memang mencoba melukis kembali bunga-bunga, vas bunga yang

menyungsang terbalik tepatnya, dan memamerkannya pada pameran pertama yang diorganisir RuangRupa, pameran penggalangan dana, Galeri Cemara bulan Maret 2000. Di antara karya para satiris politik macam Toni Volunteerero, Agung Kurniawan, dan Alit Ambara yang ikut mendukung terselenggaranya pameran tersebut, karya-karya pengagas RuangRupa memang terlihat lebih kental muatan personalnya. Lukisan Hafiz misalnya. *Outline* sesosok figur perempuan warna biru memeluk sesosok figur laki-laki merah hitam. Dalam perspektif yang tak beraturan, ada ranjang warna putih, botol, pohon, rumah merah nyala, goretan bangku panjang, kelamin telanjang, garis gelap di kejauhan; singkatnya: sebuah lanskap yang intim, barangkali lanskap percintaan, yang Hafiz kenal betul, yang "figur perempuan itu" kenal betul, tanpa ekspresi yang dibuat-buat atau romantisme artifisial.

Sejak pameran itulah, secara publik Ruang-Rupa berdiri. Dengan memakai sepetak kamar Lilia Nursita di Pondok Labu sebagai sekretariat, proyek residensi seniman mulai dirumuskan. Tak lama, didapatlah pinjaman tempat untuk teknis penggarapan proyek pertama itu: sebuah studio kerja seorang "*romantic Rothko*" yang –tanpa mengecilkan arti bantuannya pada RuangRupa—bisa jadi contoh terbaik bagaimana arsitektur kontemporer berjalan salah arah (tepatnya, salah lanskap).

Proyek pertama ini mempersoalkan seni dalam ruang publik. RuangRupa mengundang dan mempertemukan dua komunitas seni dari Yogyakarta, yakni Taring Padi dan Apotik Komik, yang waktu itu dikenal punya pandangan kesenian yang bertolak belakang, untuk bekerja menggarap salah satu aspek ruang publik pilihan mereka di Jakarta. Kalau mau



jujur, jatuhnya pilihan pada kedua komunitas itu sebenarnya tidak terlalu didasari observasi yang mendalam tentang adanya komunitas-komunitas lain yang juga menggarap ruang publik. Pemberitaan media yang cukup gencar tentang mereka, di samping pertemanan dengan personel-personel kedua komunitas itu, lebih mempengaruhi kami dalam menjatuhkan pilihan. Andai itu sebuah kelemahan, untungnya proyek ini mendapat imbalan kritis dari jurnal RuangRupa sendiri, yang kami namai *Karbon*. Nomor perdana *Karbon*, yang digarap Ugeng T. Moetidjo, melancarkan serangkaian esai kritis yang intinya menyatakan –tentunya kalimat berikut ini harus disadari sebagai tafsir saya atas esai UTM tersebut—bahwa “keindahan adalah ilham dan hakikat terakhir sebuah karya seni setelah penolakan represif dan laku pemahlawanan terhadap zaman menyingkir dari kebutuhan-kebutuhan manusia”. Singkatnya, ia tidak setuju dengan cara dua komunitas tersebut

maupun cara RuangRupa menyikapi ruang publik dan kesenian.

Karbon edisi perdana terbit bulan November 2000. Saat itu RuangRupa telah mempunyai tempat nyaman berlantai dua gaya orang kaya ‘80-an yang disewa dari seorang pilot maskapai penerbangan komersil di sebuah kompleks perumahan daerah Kalibata-Pasar Minggu. *Karbon* mendapat pelbagai tanggapan. Selain mereka yang memuji basa-basi dan mereka yang memang ingin berlangganan, sebagian besar mencela gaya bahasa UTM yang memang tidak lazim untuk ukuran “manusia normal” berbahasa Indonesia. Beberapa aktivis “kiri” yang ditemui Hafiz mencampakkannya begitu saja, bisa jadi karena bahasa, bisa jadi karena isinya. Salah seorang perupa senior mengirim e-mail mengkritik “bahasa dewa” UTM tersebut. Tapi saya sering berpikir, apakah memang “setidak-terbaca” itukah *Karbon*? Masalahnya, *Karbon* terbit dwi-bahasa, Indonesia dan

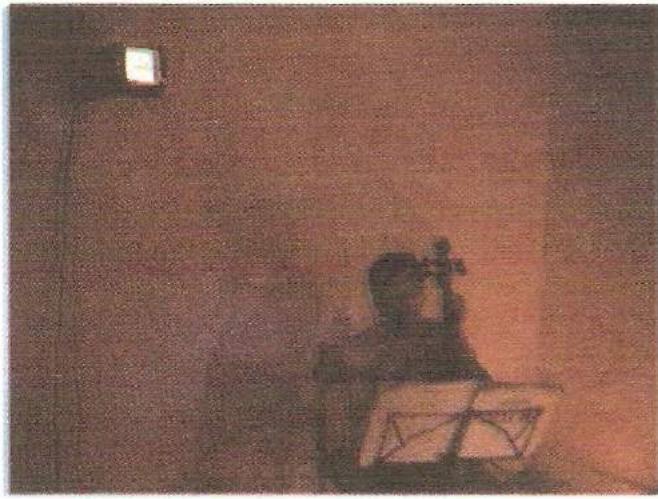
Inggris. Seorang teman yang saya ajak untuk membantu proses penerjemahan, Theresia Anggraeni, setelah membaca sekilas ternyata langsung memahami inti esai "Berkas Perkara: Keindahan Lawan Kesezamanan" yang disodorkan UTM sebagai uji coba. Padahal, teman saya ini sehari-harinya bekerja sebagai akuntan di manajemen sebuah sekolah internasional yang tak ada urusannya sama sekali dengan teori kesenian apapun juga. Salah-salah, justru niat dan selera baca orang-orang yang menyebut diri "cendekia" itulah yang ...

Sebagai komitmen "desentralisasi", katakanlah begitu, Karbon dikirimkan ke tempat-tempat yang paling tidak masuk akal seperti Kutai dan Medan, dan lewat saluran-saluran RAIN Network, ia tersebar juga di Belanda dan Belgia, dengan suatu cara pandang yang menganggap Kutai, Medan, Belanda, Belgia, atau belahan bumi manapun juga sebagai wilayah yang sama pentingnya bagi persemaian gagasan. Entah siapa yang mem-bawa, ternyata Karbon beredar juga di Bali, beberapa e-mail dikirim dari sana meminta berlangganan. Karbon dibaca juga di Barcelona (terima kasih pada Marco Kusumawijaya), dan seorang arsitek perkotaan asal Indonesia yang sedang membuat riset bidang Urban Geo-Strategi/Politik di Universidad Politecnica de Cataluña, Barcelona, mengirim tulisan tanggapan yang dimuat di edisi 2.

Baiklah, itu tadi sekelumit riwayat kronologis yang ditulis secara narsis, yang cuma ingin menggarisbawahi bahwa tak ada suara yang satu dalam RuangRupa (seperti bisa dilihat pada buku tri-bahasa terbitan Rijkakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, *Silent Zones: on globalisation and cultural interaction*; 2001; hal 164-169, di mana karya kami tumpah ruah dicampur aduk oleh Hafiz, dan hasilnya, seperti bisa diduga... ancur!).

Kesamaan personil RuangRupa terletak pada perbedaannya. Tapi, sebelum tulisan ini jadi kelewatan takabur dan mirip slogan Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, lebih baik saya beralih ke soal yang lebih teoritis: kalau begitu, apa benang merah yang menghubungkan kerja masing-masing personil yang berbeda-beda di RuangRupa? Bagaimanakah "tugas memutus rantai siklus yang kacau" itu memperoleh penjabaran konkretnya? Jawabannya sebenarnya juga sudah ada dalam e-mail Oky: "tugas seorang pelukis adalah melukis", walau perlu penjelasan lebih lanjut "apa itu melukis" dalam situasi yang begini centang perenang. (karena Oky pelukis "konvensional" dalam soal teknik, maka mesti dimengerti istilah "melukis" ini dalam arti yang luas sebagai "merupa" atau "berkesenian", sebab seperti pernah disaksikan langsung oleh Ade dalam *Trouble Spot Painting*, definisi seni lukis telah coba digeser dari masalah "bentuk" menuju masalah "mental").

Seakan belum lelah memamah biak perdebatan lama "seni untuk seni" dan "seni untuk rakyat", apa boleh buat memang pertikaian inilah yang terus menghantui seni rupa kita sampai saat ini. Saya ingin kemukakan langsung bahwa prinsip "seni untuk seni" itu mustahil. Prinsip ini membayangkan aktivitas yang berputar tidak ke mana-mana. Mungkinkah sesuatu dilakukan semata demi sesuatu itu sendiri? Bisakah kita melukis hanya demi tindakan melukis itu sendiri? Bisakah otonomi mutlak itu ada? Bisakah seseorang membunuh misalnya, untuk membunuh itu sendiri, bukan karena balas dendam, bukan untuk membela diri, bukan atas nama agama, negara, stabilitas, perintah atasan, bukan karena dorongan kebencian atau kegi-laan? Di antara mereka yang membela gagasan "seni untuk seni", belum pernah saya



jumpai satu orang pun yang melukis hanya demi tindakan melukis itu sendiri. Sebagian melukis untuk mengeluarkan gejolak jiwa, sebagian untuk mengutarakan gagasan dan konsep-konsep, sebagian untuk membantu menyelami kehidupan, sebagian menganggap melukis itu tindakan religi, kebanyakan sisanya untuk cari uang, dan lain-lain alasan. Belum seorang pun!, yang mengutarakan ia melukis untuk melukis itu sendiri.

Lagipula, negeri ini sesungguhnya tidak pernah punya sejarah "seni untuk seni" yang meyakinkan (dan mungkin imbas dari itu, belum menghasilkan karya "seni untuk rakyat" yang meyakinkan pula). Dari awal peng-

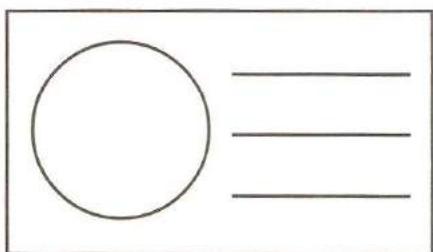
SEXdisco

MNKE MYday disco



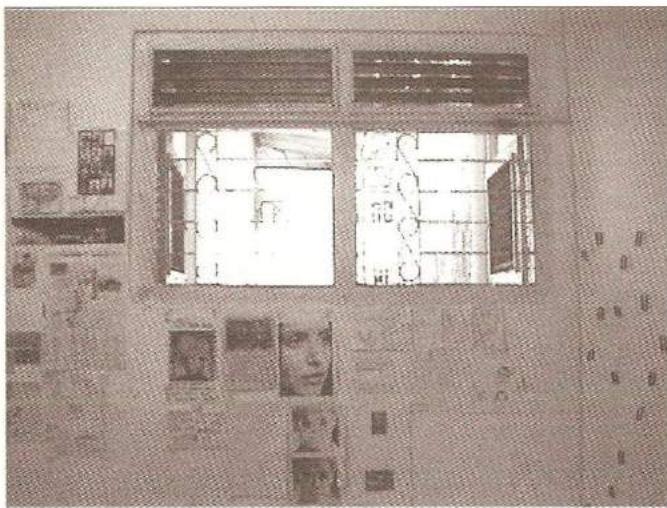
tiannya yang paling purba, seni tidak melulu berurusan dengan *kaluhuran*, melainkan juga *kagunan*. Sampai-sampai orang sebrilian Prof. Sudjoko pernah berujar satu-satunya seni rupa yang sah di negeri ini adalah seni kriya. Meski tidak seekstrem dan selangssung itu gunanya, saya berpendapat, ya, memang kita belum pernah punya "mentalitas peniadaan fungsi" dalam berkarya. Dan saya tersadar betul tentang hal ini ketika di suatu sore bersama Hafiz dan UTM, kami duduk-duduk di kedai Goethe Institute membicarakan proposal RuangRupa (ketika lembaga itu masih bertempat di Matraman). Seusai jam kerja, seorang-gadis-muda-

berambut-pirang-yang-belum-lama-bertugas-di-situ ikut dalam obrolan kami. Hafiz telah mengenalnya sebelum ini. Seorang Jerman yang ingin tahu banyak tentang seni rupa Indonesia. Maka kami pun larut dalam obrolan mengenai "kebudayaan Indonesia" yang sebenarnya terlalu suntuk bagi sore secerah itu. Di tengah-tengah obrolan dia mencoret-coret sesuatu di buku notesnya, seperti ini:



lalu bertanya: "*What's this?*" Hampir serempak kami mengasosiasikan gambar itu dengan sesuatu benda, katakanlah "transistor radio". Dan ia menjawab: "*No, it's just a circle with a square and three lines*". Saya tersenyum mendengar jawabannya. Seseorang dari benua Eropa yang sejarah seninya memiliki nama-nama seperti Apolloniaire atau Clive Bell mungkin saja menjawab seperti itu, tapi dari negeri ini, saya rasa tidak. Soalnya bukan luas atau tidaknya pengetahuan teoritis seni, melainkan "mentalitas", *Weltanschauung*, atau sebut





saja: pandangan-dunia. Sebuah objek jarang hadir untuk dirinya sendiri di sini, tapi senantiasa punya asosiasi dengan sesuatu di luar kediri-hadirannya, dan asosiasi, sedikit banyak adalah peletakan fungsi, *kagunan*. Tapi hal ini tak selalu berkaitan dengan individualitas penciptaan itu tadi, melainkan lebih dekat pada “absurditas keberadaan”, sesuatu yang eksis tanpa punya tujuan di luar dirinya. Penerapannya yang tidak didasarkan pada semacam “keyakinan imani” –dalam sejarahnya di sini—kerapkali cuma menghasilkan kegajilan dan kenihilan belaka, kalau bukan sia-sia.

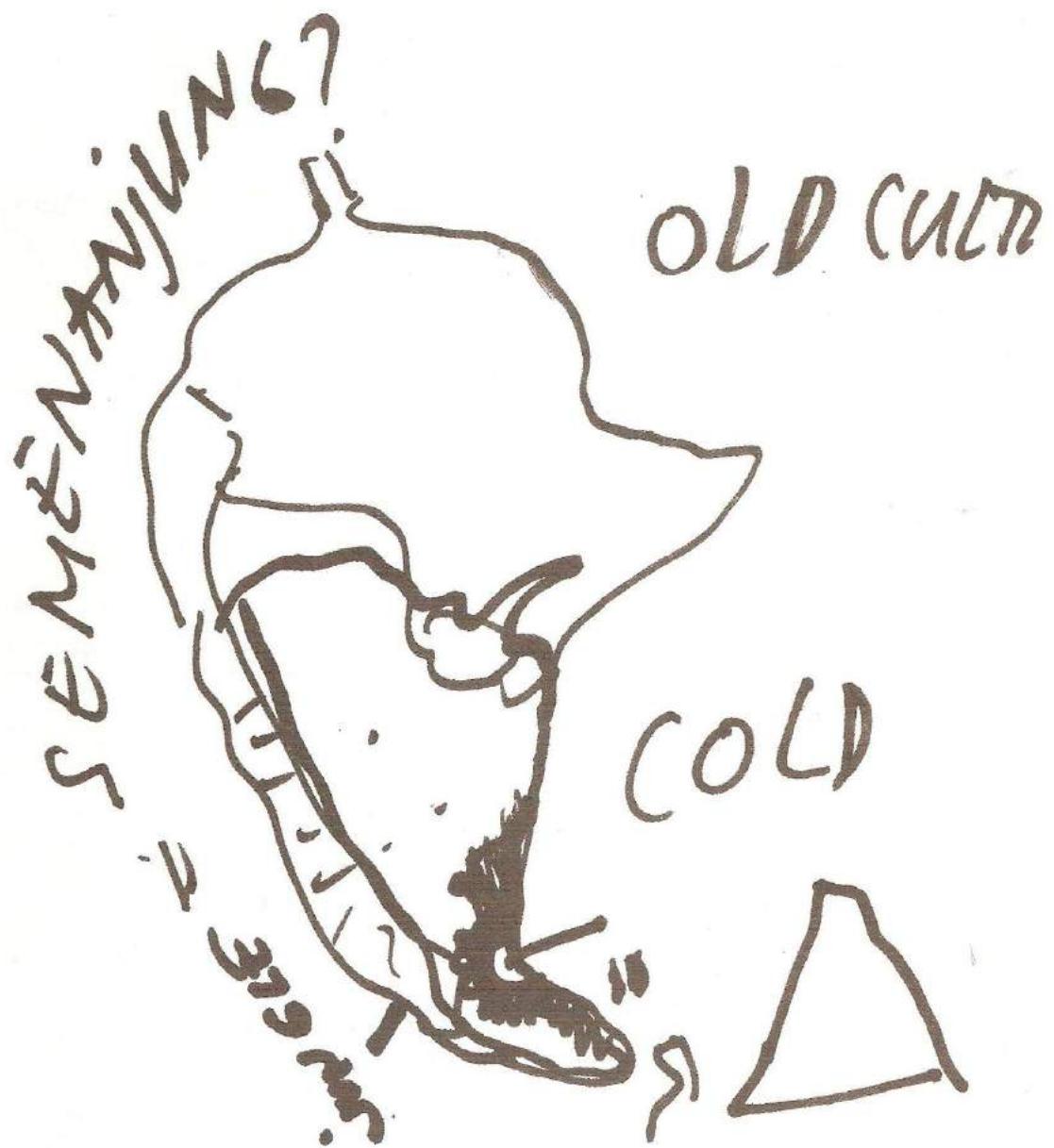
Karena nihilisme “seni untuk seni” macam itu tak masuk akal (setidaknya di sini), maka seni pasti untuk sesuatu. Seni pasti punya tujuan. Dalam hal ini, “seni untuk rakyat” jadi jauh lebih logis, meski bukan lebih baik. Hirarki “seni untuk rakyat” dan kritik terhadapnya sudah saya tuliskan dalam kasus seniman dan petani di atas tadi.

Lalu, bila yang satunya tak masuk akal dan yang lainnya buruk, di manakah letak seni? Kita harus melihat dulu apa yang ingin dituju oleh dua gagasan tadi. Baik “seni untuk seni” maupun “seni untuk rakyat” ternyata membayangkan terjadinya apa yang disebut “komunikasi universal”. Yang satu merasa warna dan bidang-bidang abstrak bisa mem-

bawakan perasaan yang serupa ke tiap pengamat, baik itu pengamat yang memandang warna merah sebagai warna angkara, maupun pengamat yang memandang warna merah sebagai lambang nasib baik. Dan yang satunya merasa bisa menyuarakan sebuah “penderitaan universal rakyat”, dengan seakan membawa terhadap fakta bahwa, misalnya, rakyat desa Ciketingudik, Ciwikul, dan Sumur Batu saling berselisih kepentingan dengan rakyat pemulung Bantargebang dalam urusan sampah.

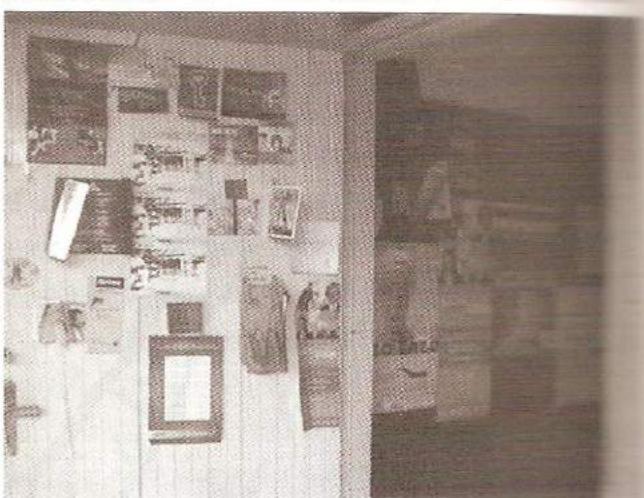
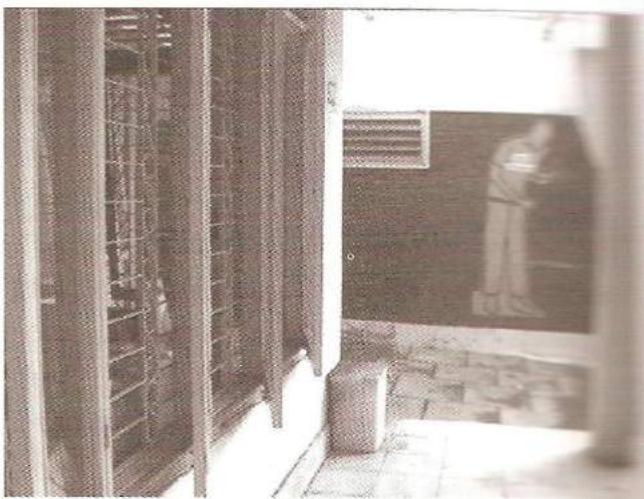
Pengusung kedua gagasan tersebut lupa bahwa pada mulanya bahasa adalah cacat, komunikasi adalah miskomunikasi, gambar adalah kata, sedang kata menyiratkan kebiasuan—ya, selalu ada yang luput dari tiap perca-kapan, sebab tafsir senantiasa mengandung salah tafsir. Peristiwa Menara Babel harus dimak-nai bukan sebagai kutukan, namun tanggung jawab. Semakin peradaban dikejar, semakin ba-nyak “beda-beda ucapan” terjadi, dan seni rupa –salah satu ujud bahasa tersebut—tak bisa berbuat lain kecuali hidup sadar dengan cacat dan miskomunikasi, sebagai salah satu titian peradaban manusia yang saling menghubungkan, tanpa berpretensi menyatukan apalagi menyeragamkan, atau kalau memang perlu: “memutuskan sekalian rantai-rantainya”.

Untuk itu seorang seniman yang sadar akan tahu bahwa ia senantiasa berada di tengah, dalam ketegangan antara “pesona warna” dan “derita manusia”. Jelas, hidup di sebuah kota dan negeri dengan sekian banyak tirani membuat seseorang harus berpihak. Membaca kisah seorang buruh perempuan 18 tahun yang belum makan selama 2 hari (*Kompas*, 12 Desember 2001) cukup untuk membangkitkan rasa marah yang benar. Tengah yang saya maksud bukanlah tengah



sebagaimana diktum jurnalisme tentang ‘cover both side’ yang berusaha bersikap netral. Orang tidak bisa menetralisir sebuah sistem yang menyebabkan seorang gadis tidak makan selama 2 hari. Netral dalam pengertian ini adalah nihilisme tersendiri yang sudah harus ditanam jauh-jauh di liang kubur bersama filsuf-filsuf menara gading dan seniman-seniman romantis. Tapi tengah yang saya maksudkan adalah kondisi ambang untuk mengubah “kemarahan” jadi “keindahan”, “makian” jadi “inspirasi”, tahu bahwa seni tidak bisa menyelamatkan dunia, tapi bisa mengilhami banyak orang untuk menyelamatkan dunia, dalam metode transfusi-keilhaman yang paling tidak tertebak sebelumnya. Ya, tengah sebagaimana seorang Subcomandante Marcos –sastrawan sekaligus gerilyawan Tentara Pembebasan Nasional Zapatista itu— harus mengendapkan rasa geramnya pada pemerintah Meksiko demi menggubah cerita kocak tentang kumbang dan dongeng-dongengan antah berantah lainnya yang tidak masuk akal. Tanpa “tengah” macam itu, orang cuma akan menghasilkan entah “sampah pajangan” entah “khotbah sloganistik”.

Lalu, sudahkah ideal ini tercapai? Jelas belum. Mengurus RuangRupa sebagai *artist initiative* yang berjalan, artinya: sistem yang tidak bisa terus menerus improvisasi, telah membuat para personilnya agak luntur daya kerjanya sebagai seniman perorangan. RuangRupa harus berurusan dengan segala kerumitan yang dihadapi orang urban umumnya, dari yang sehari-hari seperti kontrak rumah jatuh tempo, tagihan listrik, tagihan telepon, sampai yang paling ajaib seperti kebobolan rekening oleh seseorang yang mengaku menderita *split personality*. Pameran internal RuangRupa paling akhir, dalam rangka peresmian ruang kerja baru di Tebet akhir Oktober



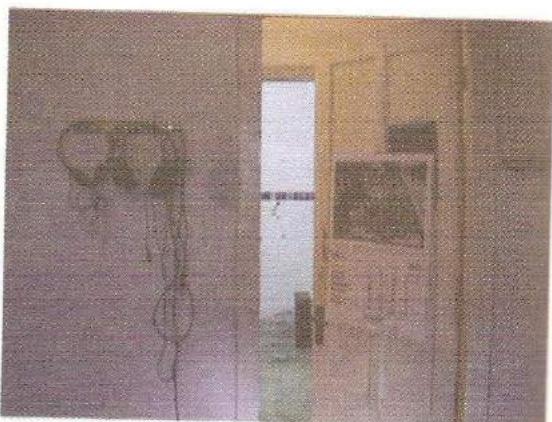
2001, hampir tidak membawakan sesuatu yang mengesankan, kecuali gambar tembok karya Oscar. Karya Ade cuma ulangan apa yang pernah digarapnya di Amsterdam dulu. Karya saya jangan ditanya. Stagnasi ini harus diatasi, baik sebagai pribadi maupun kelompok kerja. Sistem baru yang tengah dicoba, diharap memungkinkan karya, jurnal, dan administrasi berjalan berbareng tanpa saling merecoki.

Kalau ada yang konsisten dalam kerja Ruang-Rupa selama ini, maka itu adalah perhatiannya pada "ruang urban" dan "narasi kecil". Kedua hal ini berkaitan dengan cara pandang RuangRupa terhadap *visual culture* dan *fine art* itu sendiri. *Visual culture* secara luas berkaitan dengan ruang urban, yang biasanya menjadi landasan dasar tema proyek residensi seniman. Sementara *fine art* lebih berkaitan dengan narasi kecil seniman, kerja masing-masing mereka, sekalipun itu melebar melebihi batasan *fine art* lazimnya. Misalnya proyek video art RuangRupa, yang telah memakan waktu berbulan-bulan dan melibatkan peserta tak kurang dari Argentina, Belgia, Jerman, dan Jakarta sendiri. Video di situ dipandang sebagai fenomena teknologi visual "ruang urban" dan karya video art masing-masing seniman lebih merupakan "narasi kecilnya". Dalam suatu kancah *visual culture*, RuangRupa tidak memandang karya seni rupa serta merta menjadi *high art* hanya karena ia seni rupa, dan karya rupa terapan lainnya (stiker, kemasan, spanduk, dsb.) serta merta disebut *low art* hanya karena ia bukan seni rupa. Dalam hal ini, intensi dan daya cipta lebih jadi persoalan. Mereka –lagi-lagi yang saya maksud adalah kaum posmo-dernis itu—dalam usaha meruntuhkan dominasi "*high art*", dengan gegap gempita merayakan kembalinya "*low art*" dari posisi marjinalnya begitu saja, seakan tanpa kritik, tanpa jeli menilik.

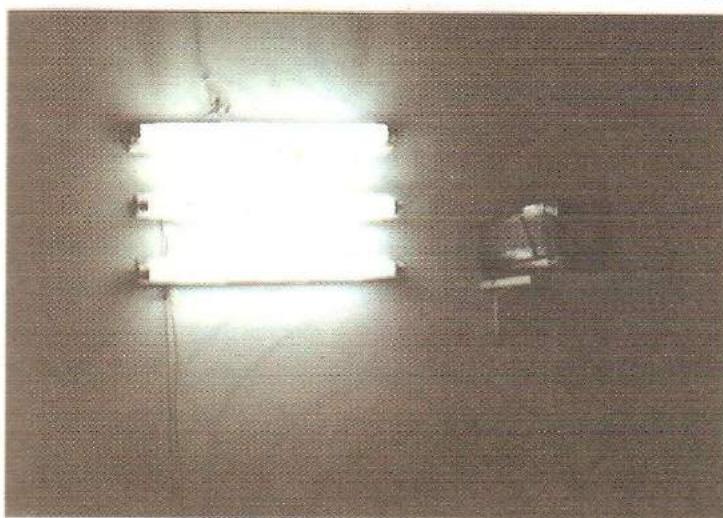
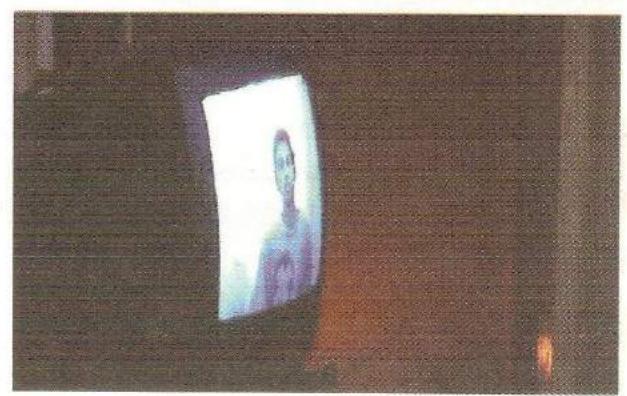
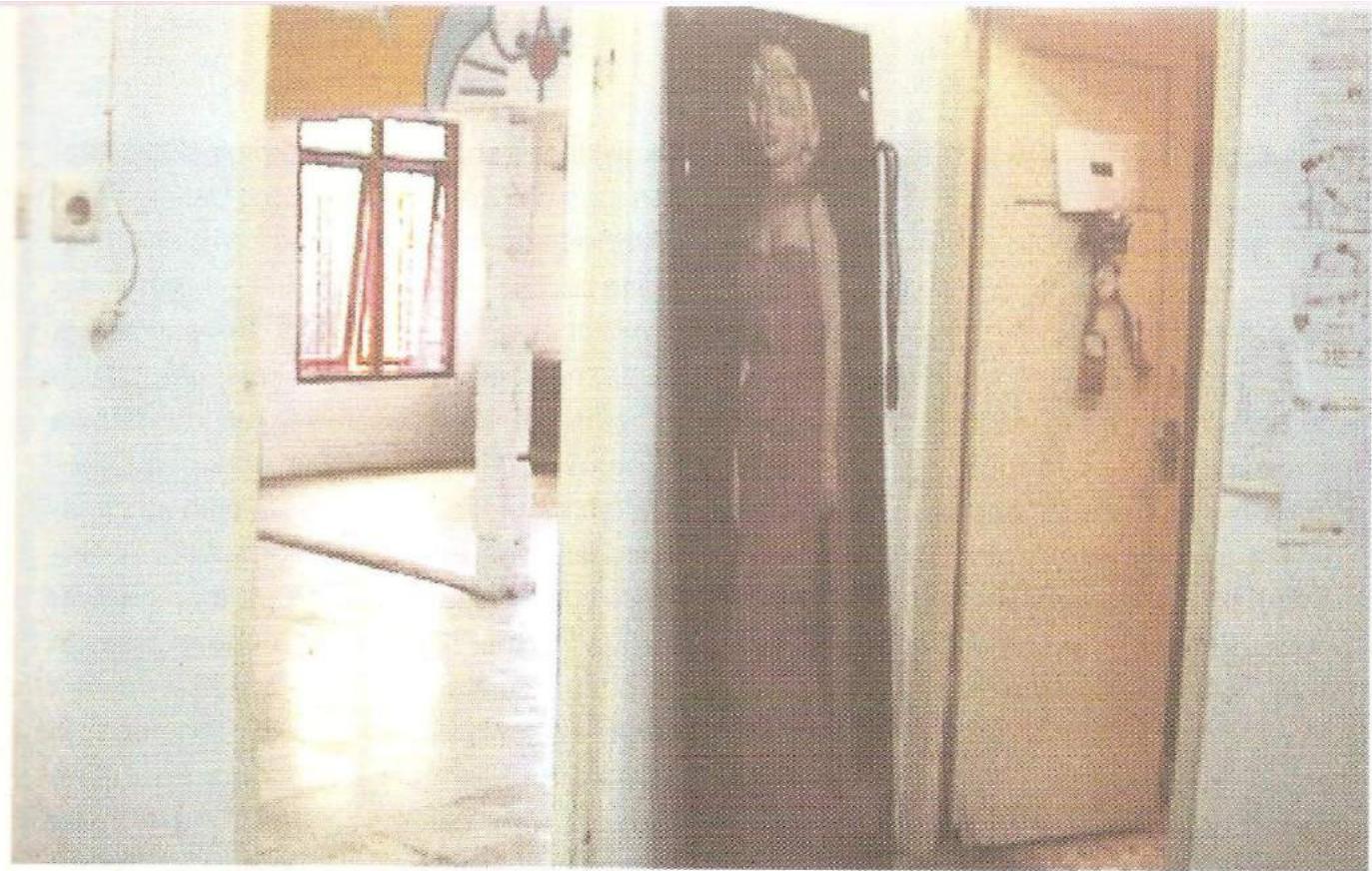
Padahal, dalam masing-masing tradisi *visual culture* tersebut tentu kita masih bisa melihat adanya tingkat-tingkat estetik, kreativitas, passion, dan greget karya per karya. Orang dengan selera yang *nggenah* tentu tahu mana yang lebih baik: desain cover kaset Deddy Dores atau Naif? Sampul buku-buku otobiografi para pejabat *post power syndrome* atau sam-pul buku-buku sastra terbitan Bentang? Batik cap atau batik tulis? Grafiti Boedoet atau mural Jak@rt 2001? Dalam lingkup "*high art*" sendiri, mana yang lebih menggetarkan: Soedjojono atau Basuki Abdullah; Srihadi atau Sri Hadhy; edIE haRA atau heRle Kris...

Perihal ruang urban barangkali sudah jelas. Kota ini memang gila sampai ke akarnya, dari gubernurnya sampai pengamenya. Hari Senin pagi jalan-jalan penuh sesak dengan orang yang berangkat kerja, seakan-akan mereka yang paling rajin sedunia, tapi hari Kamis jalan-jalan jadi lebih lengang. Orang-orang tak seberapa banyak. Lalu ke mana orang-orang yang hari Senin itu berangkat kerja? Liburkah mereka pada hari Kamis? Atau pingsan? Atau lupa bahwa Kamis juga hari kerja? Menyitir kembali proposal kami untuk kurator Gwangju Bienalle ini, manusia urban Jakarta juga lupa bahwa plastik bukanlah daun pisang, sehingga ia tidak bisa membuangnya seenaknya saja dan berharap itu akan terurai dengan sendirinya. Ia juga lupa bahwa aspal atau lantai bis kota bukanlah tanah yang bisa seketika menyerap ludah. (Saya tidak bicara tentang mereka yang pura-pura lupa tentang, katakanlah, uang puluhan miliar).

Bisa jadi amnesia memang sakit terparah yang diidap manusia urban. Cara penyembuhannya tak bisa lain cuma dengan mengingat, dan ingatan, pada hakikatnya, berdiri sendiri-sendiri. Bahkan dalam apa yang



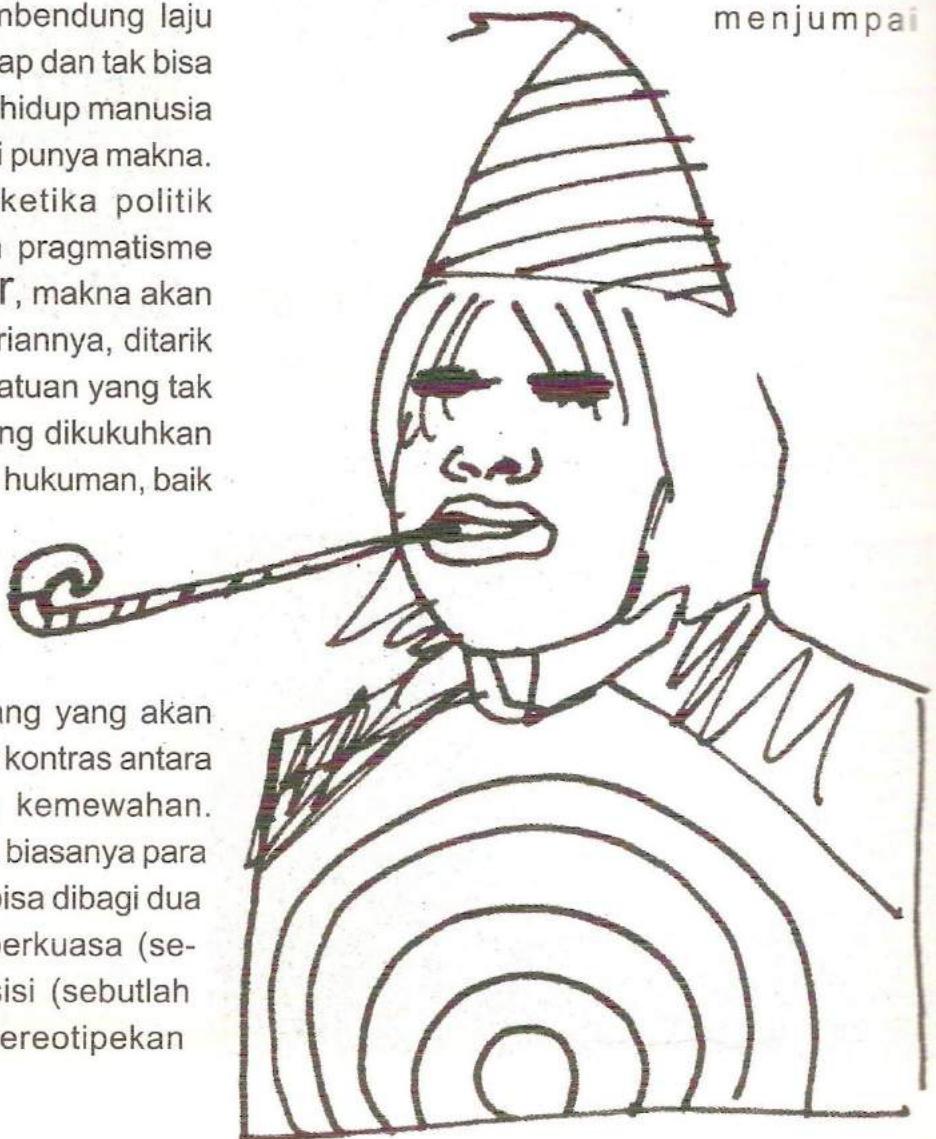
A photograph of an advertisement for Absolut Vodka. The ad features a competition between "BEER" and "TEA". The word "VS" is prominently displayed between two panels. The left panel shows a bottle of beer with the text "BEER" and "ABSOLUT VERSUS". The right panel shows a cup of tea with the text "TEA". Below the competition panels is a photograph of a man and a woman in a romantic pose. The brand name "DE FABRIEK" is visible at the bottom right of the advertisement.



disebut ‘memori kolektif masya-rakat’, tiap-tiap orang punya ruang yang tak bisa ditembus orang lain. “Nasib adalah kesunyian masing-masing”, kata Chairil di tahun 1946. Dengan ini ia bukan cuma membuat salah satu puisi cinta yang paling berhasil dalam sejarah sastra Indonesia, melainkan juga melemparkan ironi modernisme yang menghantam negara-negara berkembang. Hidup yang selama ini adem ayem diayomi puak, kaum, tradisi, mendadak dilempar ke suatu keriuhan di mana manusia harus memilih jalannya sendiri-sendiri, kesunyianya masing-masing. Makna bukan lagi terberi, tapi dicipta. “Bangsa muda menjadi, baru bisa bilang ‘aku’,” tambahnya tahun 1948. Kalau RuangRupa berkuat dengan persoalan “narasi kecil”, itu disebabkan kesadaran inilah, kesadaran bahwa komunalitas takkan bisa membendung laju modernisme, ‘aku’ telanjur diucap dan tak bisa ditelan balik, tapi bukan berarti hidup manusia yang sendiri-sendiri itu tidak lagi punya makna. Justru di saat seperti ini, ketika politik dijalankan dengan “p” kecil dan pragmatisme dengan “P” maha besar, makna akan tewas ketika ia hilang kesendiriannya, ditarik begitu rupa ke dalam satuan-satuan yang tak diakrabinya, proyek-proyek yang dikukuhkan lewat sekian banyak aturan dan hukuman, baik itu digaungi slogan “revolusi belum selesai”, “mengisi kemerdekaan”, maupun “melanjutkan reformasi”. RuangRupa, misalnya, bukanlah orang yang akan menggambarkan Jakarta lewat kontras antara generalisasi kemiskinan dan kemewahan. Orang yang gemar generalisasi biasanya para pembuat definisi, dan mereka bisa dibagi dua dalam hal ini: antara pihak berkuasa (sebutlah polisi) dan pihak oposisi (sebutlah aktivis). Polisi sering menstereotipekan

kemiskinan sebagai sumber kriminalitas, seakan lupa bahwa kejahatan yang paling menyalahkan kebanyakan justru dilakukan oleh orang-orang berdasar yang sama sekali tidak memiliki kemiskinan sebagai motifnya. Sedang aktivis kerap membela kriminalitas kalangan bawah dengan dalih kemiskinan, seakan lupa bahwa dengan demikian mereka makin mengukuhkan stereotipe yang dibuat oleh saingannya. Generalisasi, definisi hitam-putih, stereotipe—bukan tugas RuangRupa membuat itu semua. Kami lebih tertarik dengan wilayah abu-abu belantara Jakarta, misalkan aneka ragam stiker aneh-aneh yang tertempel di mana-mana, seperti yang digarap dalam proyek kedua kami *Cetak Urban: Yang Personal di Atas Tafsiran Sosiologis*. Selang penggarapan proyek ini, tanpa sengaja Ade

menjumpai





sebuah agen koran bernama, percaya atau tidak, "Harapan Gagal"! Di bilangan Kampung Melayu yang hibuk dengan bis-bis dan angkutan kota, pemilik agen koran ini seakan sedang mencemooh sendiri cita-citanya yang kandas di kota besar. Nama itu bukan sekadar nama nyleneh grup band kemarin sore, tapi di nama itu tersimpan riwayat, harapan, dan keberanian memperolok diri sendiri. Satu agen koran di antara ribuan agen koran Jakarta, apa yang penting di sana?, tapi itulah kiranya yang lebih bisa menginspirasi kami di RuangRupa.

Alexander Sudheim, seorang perupa, musisi, dan jurnalis Afrika Selatan yang kami undang dalam proyek Cetak Urban ini – mengingat sejarah negerinya yang kelam oleh rasisme terlembaga—menemukan terkaget-kaget sebuah stiker bertuliskan "Janitors

Against Apartheid" di daerah Blok M. "The weirdest shit I picked up there", komentarnya dalam catatan harian yang dikirimkannya seusai proyek ini. Mengenai kerja RuangRupa ia juga berkomentar (dikutip masih dengan semangat narsistik tulisan ini): "Ada penghargaan bagi jiwa inisiatif dan kemampuan alamiah dari orang-orang yang terlibat untuk saling berinteraksi dengan cara yang cerdas dan kreatif, tidak seperti kegilaan paranoid orang-orang Eropa yang yakin bahwa kalau kau tidak memaksa orang "berkarya" dalam pengertian yang paling puritan, proyek tak bakal selesai". Perihal urban ia berkata: "Ruang ibarat air, dan di Jakarta kita bagaikan sekelompok ikan dalam kubangan dangkal saling berebut mengisi otak dan darah kita. Tapi jangan lupa, kekurangan oksigen bisa



juga menghasilkan halusinasi-halusinasi menarik..." Tapi saya tak sedang berhalusinasi saat menulis pada Reinaart van Hoe (perupa, orang Eropa, tapi bukan dari jenis yang dibilang Alex) tanggal 28 November 2000, ringkasnya: "Seniman tidak bisa lagi berkarya di ruang publik demi penyadaran, sebab kesadaran masyarakat kini dibangun oleh media massa dan LSM. Seniman tidak bisa lagi menyajikan hiburan, sebab sudah banyak media yang jauh lebih menghibur seperti koran kuning dan televisi. Seniman tidak bisa lagi mengganggu publik, mengejutkan publik, sebab publik sudah terganggu dengan soal ekonomi keseharian dan biasa terkejut dengan kebijakan politik yang kerap berubah. Jadi, satu-satunya cara seniman masuk ke ruang publik adalah lewat cara-cara yang lebih intim, bicara tentang hal-hal yang lebih personal,

sebab publik bukanlah entitas anonim, tapi kumpulan banyak orang yang punya nama, sejarah, dan perasaannya sendiri-sendiri". Ade mengirimkan inti persoalan yang kami hadapi ini kepada Gertrude Flentege (koordinator RAIN, cerdas dan cantik, orang Eropa juga, moga-moga bukan dari jenis yang dibilang Alex), dan ia menimpali: "Cukup aneh bahwa orang-orang jadi terbiasa dengan hal-hal yang mengejutkan. Ini memang agak menyedihkan dan sebenarnya membuat kita harus berpikir ulang tentang posisi seniman dalam keadaan tersebut".

Posisi seniman dalam keadaan tersebut, posisi seniman dalam sejarah. Ya, sejarah seni rupa modern Indonesia memang sebuah proyek besar. Begitupun sejarah seni rupa "post-modern" yang kelahirannya saja diwarnai skandal bienalle tipu-tipuan yang herannya tak

pernah dilirik lagi sebagai cacat historis yang mesti dikuak. Belakangan ini orang malah sibuk kembali mencari-cari kebaruan medium, demi –katanya—melawan kemandegan isi dan bentukan, seakan lupa bahwa *Pengantin Revolusi* sama sekali tidak baru dalam kategori apapun juga, tapi ilham yang disampaikannya ternyata tak kunjung mandeg bicara. Di balik semua itulah, di balik seluruh penampakan sejarah yang gembung oleh keganjilan-keganjilan tak berkritik, seraya menyingkirkan semua ketidakjujuran yang cuma membuaikan penjaja sampah pajangan, RuangRupa mencoba menggarap, sebagai sekelompok individu yang punya narasi kecilnya sendiri-sendiri, dalam himpitan ruang yang begini lebar namun sesak, tanpa perlu dikategorikan secara sempit sebagai ini atau itu, keinsyafan sepenuhnya bahwa cita-cita idil kebudayaan pada mulanya adalah angan-angan, gerak hidup seni berpangkal dari ingatan, yang kecil, yang personal, remeh, sahaja, kadang terabai, yang tanpanya hidup justru jadi tak punya arti, dan tanpa ingatan orang pun akhirnya mati. Membunuh diri.

Ronny Agustinus – Desember 2001

Catatan: Cold Beer Conversation adalah judul e-mail Hafiz tanggal 15 Juli 1999. Tanggal 22 Juli 1999, Ade bilang bahwa bir Corona dipasarkan di Spanyol dengan nama seksi Coronita.

Bila ada yang menganggap tulisan ini bertele-tele, bikin pusing, sok lucu, sok tahu, narsis abis, tapi tak menjelaskan apa-apa, memang iya. Sebab kadang aktivitas RuangRupa juga seperti itu. Hidup pun kadang seperti itu. Apalagi hari sedang hujan sore ini. Saya tak bisa ke mana-mana dan satu-satunya pembunuh kejemuhan cuma menulis panjang lebar. Sambil mendengar tetes air saya jadi ingat bahwa hujan sinonim dengan RAIN dalam bahasa Inggris, dan RAIN sinonim dengan Rijkakademie Artist Initiative Network dalam obrolan sehari-hari RuangRupa, yang mengucur deras bagai rasa bersalah post-kolonialisme... he..he..he...

~ship, professor's post.
pro-ficient /prə'fɪənt/ *adj* skilled. **pro-ficiency** *n* [U].
pro-file /'profɪəfl/ *n* [C] 1 side view, esp. of the head. 2 edge or outline of something. 3 brief biography. *n* & draw, show, in profile.
profit /'profɪt/ *n* 1 [U] advantage obtained from something. 2 [C, U] money gained in business, etc. *n* & *v* ~ **from/by**, be helped by; make a profit from.
~able /'ɒʃəbl/ *adj* (a) bringing profit. (b) (fig) useful; *a ~ able discussion*. **~ably** *adv*.
profound /'profənd/ *adj* (formal) deep; ~ interest/silence. 2 having great knowledge. 3 needing much thought to understand. **~ly** *adv* deeply; **~ly hurt by his insults**.
pro-fuse /'profju:s/ *adj* (formal) 1 very plentiful. 2 too great; ~ apologies. **~ly** *adv*. **pro-fu-sion** /sən/ *n* [U] (formal) great supply.
pro-gramme (also *and US -gram*) /'prəgræm/ *n* [C] 1 list of items, events, etc., eg for a concert. 2 plan of what is to be done. 3 data, etc fed into a computer. 4 radio or TV broadcast. *v* make a programme; plan.
pro-gram-mer, person who prepares a computer programme.
pro-gress /'prəgres/ *n* 1 [U] forward movement; improvement; development. *In ~*, being made, done; *work in ~*.
pro-gress /'prəgres/ *v* make progress.
pro-gres-sion /'prəgreʃn/ *n* [U] moving forward; improvement.
pro-gres-sive /'prəgresɪv/ *adj* 1 moving forward. 2 increasing by regular amounts: *~ taxes*. 3 supporting improvement, modernization: *~ policies*. *n* [C] person supporting a progressive policy. **~ly** *adv*.
pro-hib-it /prə'hɪbit/ *v* say that something must not be done.
pro-hib-i-tion /prəu'bɪʃn/ *n* 1 [U] prohibiting. 2 [C] order that forbids.
pro-hib-i-tive /prə'hibɪtɪv/ *adj* intended to prevent something: *~ tax rates*.
proj ect /'prədʒekɪt/ *n* [C] (plan for) a scheme or undertaking.
proj ect /'prədʒekɪt/ *v* (I) make plans for. 2 ~ sth *on/to* sth.

cause a shadow, a picture etc to fall on a surface. 3 throw, send ~ missiles into space. 4 stand out from a surface; a *balcony that ~s over the street*.
pro-ject-tile /prə'dʒektɪl/ *n* [C] something sent forward, esp from a gun.
pro-jec-tion /prə'dʒekʃn/ *n* [C] something that stands out, something projected.
pro-jec-tor /prə'dʒektə(r)/ *n* [C] apparatus for projecting pictures onto a screen.
proletariat /prə'lɛtərɪət/ *n* [C] (modern use) the working class. **proletarian** *n* [C], *adj* (member) of the proletariat.
pro-lif-er-a-te /prə'lifə'reɪt/ *v* (formal) 1 reproduce by rapid multiplication of cells. 2 (fig) increase rapidly. **pro-lif-er-a-tion** *n* [U].
pro-lif-ic /prə'lifɪk/ *adj* (formal) producing much or many. **writers**.
pro-logue /'prəlu:g/ *n* [C] 1 introductory (part of) a poem. 2 (fig) first of a series of events.
pro-long /prə'lɔ:n/ *v* (I) make longer. **~ action** /'ækʃn/ *n* [C, U].
prom-on-ade /prə'mo:nəd/ *n* [C] (place made for) a walk or ride, esp along a seafront. *n* a walk along a promenade.
promi-nent /prə'minənt/ *adj* 1 standing out; easily seen. 2 (of persons) distinguished, important. **~ly** *adv*. **promi-nen-tar-y** (a) [U] being prominent. (b) [C] prominent(1) part or pace.
pro-mis-ca-tious /prə'mi:ʃnəs/ *adj* (esp) casual in sexual relationships. **~ly** *adv*. **promi-cuity** /'skju:ti:t/ *n* [U].
pro-mis-e /prə'mi:z/ *v* [I] written or spoken undertaking to do something. 2 [C] that which undertakes to do. 3 [C] hope good results: *a writer of ~s*. 4 [I] make a promise(1) to. 2 give cause for expecting. *If you tell him ~, he'll come*. **~ day**, **promis-ing** *adj* likely to succeed.
pro-mo-tor-y /prə'mo:təri/ *n* [C] (pl -ies) high point of holding standing out from the crowd.
pro-mote /prə'mo:t/ *v* (I) give person higher position or rank. 2 help to organize: *~ a new company*. 3 advertise. **pro-mot-er** (esp) person who promotes an companies, etc.
pro-mo-tion /prə'mo:ʃn/ *n* 1

[C, U] (instance of) promoting. 2 advertising using publicity, etc.
prompt /prə'mɒpt/ *adj* done, set, without delay. *a ~ reply*. **~ly** *adv*. **~ness** *n* [U].
prompt /prə'mɒpt/ *v* (I) cause (a person to do something). 2 tell (an actor) what to say if he forgets. *a ~* [C] action of prompting(2). **~er**, person who prompts actors.

pron /prə'nɒn/ *n* [C] 1 (living) face downwards. 2 ~ to, tending to ~ in accidents.
prong /prɒŋ/ *n* [C] (something like) one of the pointed parts of a fork.

pro-noun /'prənʌn/ *n* [C] word used in place of a noun, eg *he, it, here, me, them*.

pro-nounce /prə'nau:s/ *v* (I, T) make the sound of (a word, etc). 2 declare (esp formally). *The doctor ~d him dead*. **pro-nounced** *adj* definite; easy to notice. **~ment** *n* [C] formal declaration.

pro-nun-ci-a-tion /prə'nau:sɪəʃn/ *n* 1 [U] way in which a language is spoken. 2 [C] way in which a word is pronounced.

proof /prɒf/ *adj* ~ (against), able to resist; ~ against bullets, bullets, ~. 2 **bullet-proof**, *adj* ~ make resistant (esp to water).

proof /prɒf/ *n* 1 [C, U] that which shows that something is a fact. 2 [C, U] test. *Put it to the ~*. 3 [C] oral copy of something pointed. 4 [U] standard of strength of alcoholic liquors.

prop /prɒp/ *n* [C] 1 support, esp a beam or bar. 2 (fig) person who supports another. *a ~*. 3 [C] support.

propa-ganda /prə'pægəndə/ *n* [U] (means of) spreading of information, ideas, etc.

propa-gate /prə'pæɡeɪt/ *v* (I, T) increase the number of plants, animals) by reproduction. 2 spread; ~ knowledge.

propa-gation /n/ *n* [U].

propel /prə'pel/ *v* (I, T) drive forward. **~ler**, blades which turn to move a ship, helicopter, etc.

proper /prə'pə(r)/ *adj* 1 correct, sensible. 2 polite, well-behaved.

~ name/name, (gram) name used for a person, town, etc. eg *Miss France*. **~ly** *adv* in a correct manner.

properly /'prəpə(r)/ *n* (pl -ies)

[U] possessions. 2 [C] area land (and buildings). 3 spec. quality, chemical properties.

prop-ec-tor /prə'pɛktə(r)/ *n* (pl -tors) [U] power of telling what will happen in the future. 2 [C] statement that tells what will happen.

prop-ec-tor /prə'pɛktə(r)/ *n* (pl -tors) say what will happen.

prophet /'profɪt/ *n* [C] 1 religious teacher who claims that his teaching comes directly from God. 2 person who foretells the future. **~ie** prophet, *adj*.

proportion /prə'pɔ:ʃn/ *n* 1 [U] relation of one thing to another in quantity, size, etc. *in ~ to*.

relative to; *paid in ~ to work done*. 2 [C] share. 3 (pl) size; *state of substantial ~s*. 4 *in proportion to*.

pro-po-sal /prə'po:zəl/ *n* 1 [U] proposing. 2 [C] plan or scheme. 3 [C] offer (esp of marriage).

pro-pose /prə'po:z/ *v* (I) 1 offer for consideration. 2 offer (marriage). 3 put forward (a person's name) for an office.

pro-posi-tion /prə'po:zɪʃn/ *n* [C]

statement. 2 offer (esp. in business). 3 (informal) indecent suggestion made to a girl. 4 *in* (ch) make a proposition(3) to.

pro-pri-etary /prə'pri:təri/ *adj* owned by somebody. *a ~ name*, eg Kodak.

pro-pri-ator /prə'pri:tətə(r)/ *n* [C] owner, esp of buildings, land. **pro-pri-ess** /-rɪs/ *n* [C] woman proprietor.

pro-pri-ty /prə'pri:tɪ/ *n* (pl -ties) (formal) 1 [C, U] correct behaviour and morals. 2 [U] correctness; rightness. *I doubt the ~ of granting his request*.

pro-pul-sion /prə'pʊlʃn/ *n* [U] propelling force.

pro-rata /prə'rə:tə(r)/ *adj* (Lat.) according to the share, etc of each.

pro-scribe /prə'skraɪb/ *v* forbid by law.

prose /prəʊz/ *n* (pl -ses) language not in verse form. *▷ poetry*.

pro-sec-ute /prə'se:kjʊt/ *v* start legal proceedings against.

pro-sec-u-tion /-ʃn/ *n* (pl -tions) (of) prosecuting; person who prosecutes. *▷ defence(3)*

prosecutor /'prəsɪkʃnə(r)/ *n* [C] person who prosecutes.

espacios de lo posible

la práctica artística contemporánea

de cómo retraducir estas categorías cuando la "obra" es apenas un punto de paso en una producción, y la sociedad ha perdido fuerza como figura de comunidad, como "pueblo".

Señaló también como marcas del contexto actual "un déficit de colectividad y un exceso de conexión", dados por la hipocomunicación del mundo globalizado, la retracción del Estado de bienestar y el fin del sistema del arte concebido desde el siglo XVIII y en vigencia hasta hace muy poco tiempo.

Y refirió cómo artistas en diversas partes del mundo, individualmente o por medio de la construcción de microsistemas sociales distintos del tradicional concepto de nacionalidad, se ocupan de reparar este proceso de desintegración. "Cada acto de reparación es un acto de generación de poder", dijo. Y mencionó, como ejemplos concretos entre los presentes, el proyecto Ruang Rupa, de Darmawan; *Historias del arte/ Diccionario de certezas e intuiciones*, de Aisenberg; e incluso el programa Trama,

teoría del cambio

Es reabre un espacio de pensamiento

glos. La publicación de *Contrapoder, una introducción*, por la editorial De Mano en Mano, parece

en tanto conformación de una colectividad temporaria que apuesta a extenderse a otras comunidades y a ejercer una transformación efectiva en su medio. En este sentido, Laddaga llegó a proponer la conformación de este tipo de redes como una función creativa del artista.

Ruang Rupa es un grupo de artistas que trabaja por fuera de la órbita estatal, en el frágil contexto socio-político de Yakarta. Tiene por base de operaciones un espacio en el que los miembros y gente de otras procedencias se encuentra para investigar, exponer, discutir y trabajar. Ruang Rupa, que se maneja por relaciones horizontales, ha resultado muy exitoso como forma de socialidad centrada en la intervención de espacios públicos por medio de performances, pintadas en muros y otras acciones callejeras. Darmawan, por su lado, opera también en salas de exhibición, con propuestas que apuntan a constituir nuevas redes sociales.

El trabajo de Aisenberg, por fin, consiste en un diccionario en constante expansión en el que colaboran más de doscientas personas. Su estructura abierta permite, así, no sólo la composición de un registro de conceptos que delimitan un territorio rico y subjetivo de cruces propio de una época, sino también de una plataforma de proposiciones para pensar el arte y su entorno.



Camer Lab. Proyecciones que cubren paredes, televisores de plasma y ventanas transformadas en pantalla sirven de escenario para que el grupo de artistas culminen en vivo el proceso creativo de sus obras. Participarán Bernie Heredia (proyecciones líquidas), María Onís & Carolina Kohan (videocarte), Sebastián Iannizzotto (arte digital), Altocamet y COMA (DJ set).

La Morocha Home, Bonpland 1898.

Miércoles 5, a la medianoche. Gratis.

Vidas destiladas



インドネシアの「チェムティ・アート・ハウス」で日本の状況を紹介するレクチャー

政治・経済が比較的安定しているシンガポールでは、政府機関が基金を設けて芸術活動を支援している。もっとも発表の場は少なく、ここでも作家が資金を出し合い独自のスペースを運営していた。

タイのバンコクでは「プロジェクト304」がアート・プロジェクト

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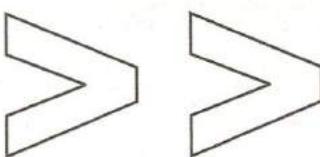


アプロデューサー 原 夕子

多ジャンルの融合生む

「私の
術館お
んどはオ
に、メ
もある
批評
ないわ
で作り
た美術
館と大
きな東
南アメ
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くのめ
て勢い
日本一
ク作る
しか付
けるを
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interview Trolley Magazine



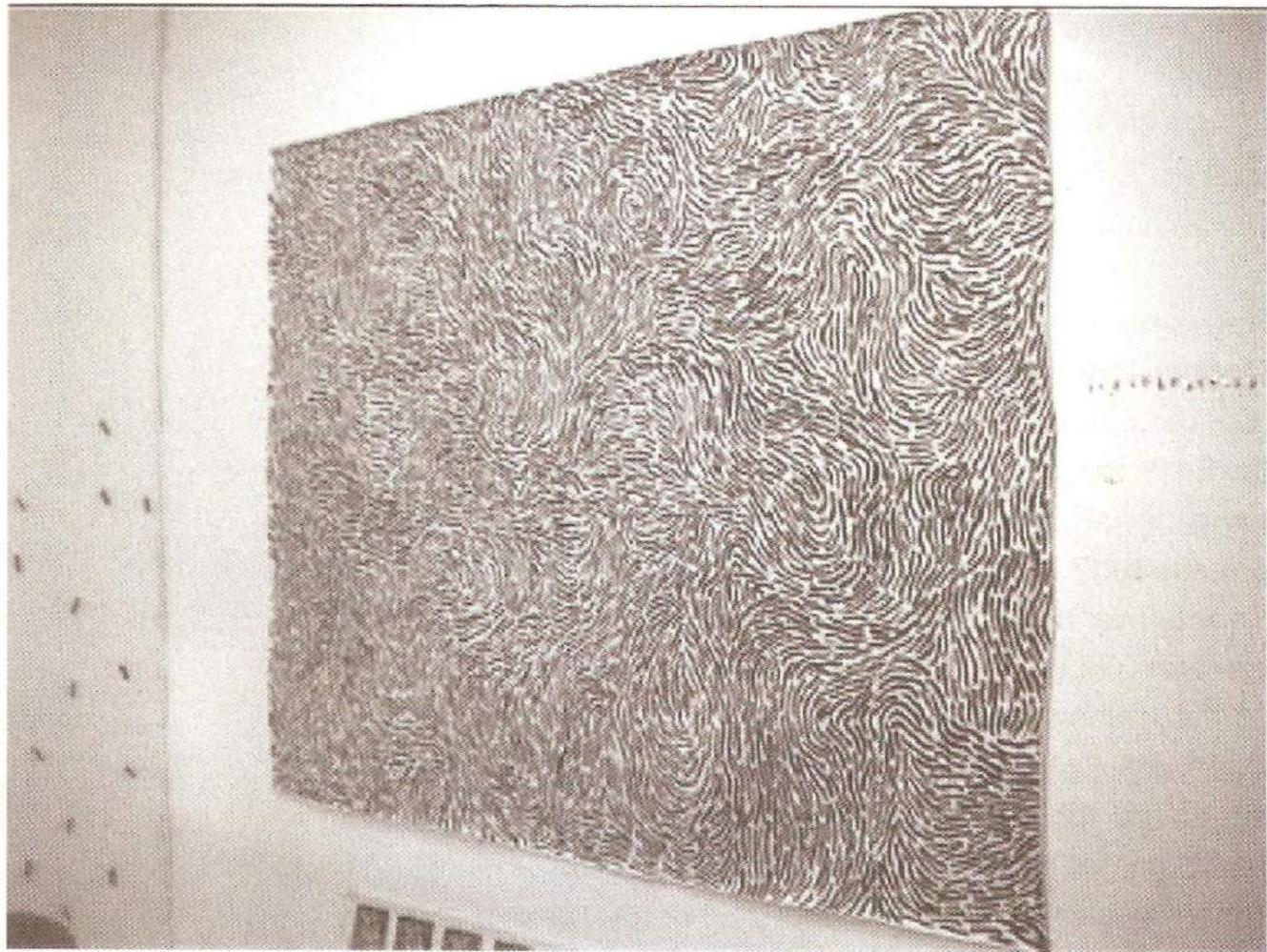
Hafiz (RuangRupa)
Nasta Soetarjo
(trolley magazine)
Gustaff (trolley magazine)

Oke, sekarang yang paling standar kapan Ruangrupa mulai jalan?

Januari 2000, tapi sebetulnya bulan Januari 1999 udah mulai, tapi masih virtual. Ade waktu itu masih di Belanda. Gua di sini sama kawan-kawan gua yang laen di Jakarta bikin semacam network milis. Di sana kita diskusi, bikin rencana-rencana. Waktu Ade balik ke sini kita bikin kongkritnya, tapi waktu itu nggak ada kantor atau apa, jadi ngumpulnya ya di warung. Pokoknya ngapa-ngapain kita di warung aja. Waktu itu yang aktif ada 6 orang: gua (Hafiz), Ade Darmawan, Ronny Agustinus, Nursita (Ita), terus ada Rithmi (Minuli), anak grafis IKJ, terus satu lagi Oky Arfie, anak desain grafis IKJ. Ya 6 orang ini yang diriin, yang diskusi lama sampe kongkrit bulan Januari waktu si Ade balik. Tapi ya Januari itu kita masih belum punya sekretariat atau apaan, jadi kalo ketemuin di restoran aja...

Common valuenya apa?

Yang ngikutnya tuh Jakarta. Gini lo, di sini tuh ada mimpi. Pertama harus dilihat



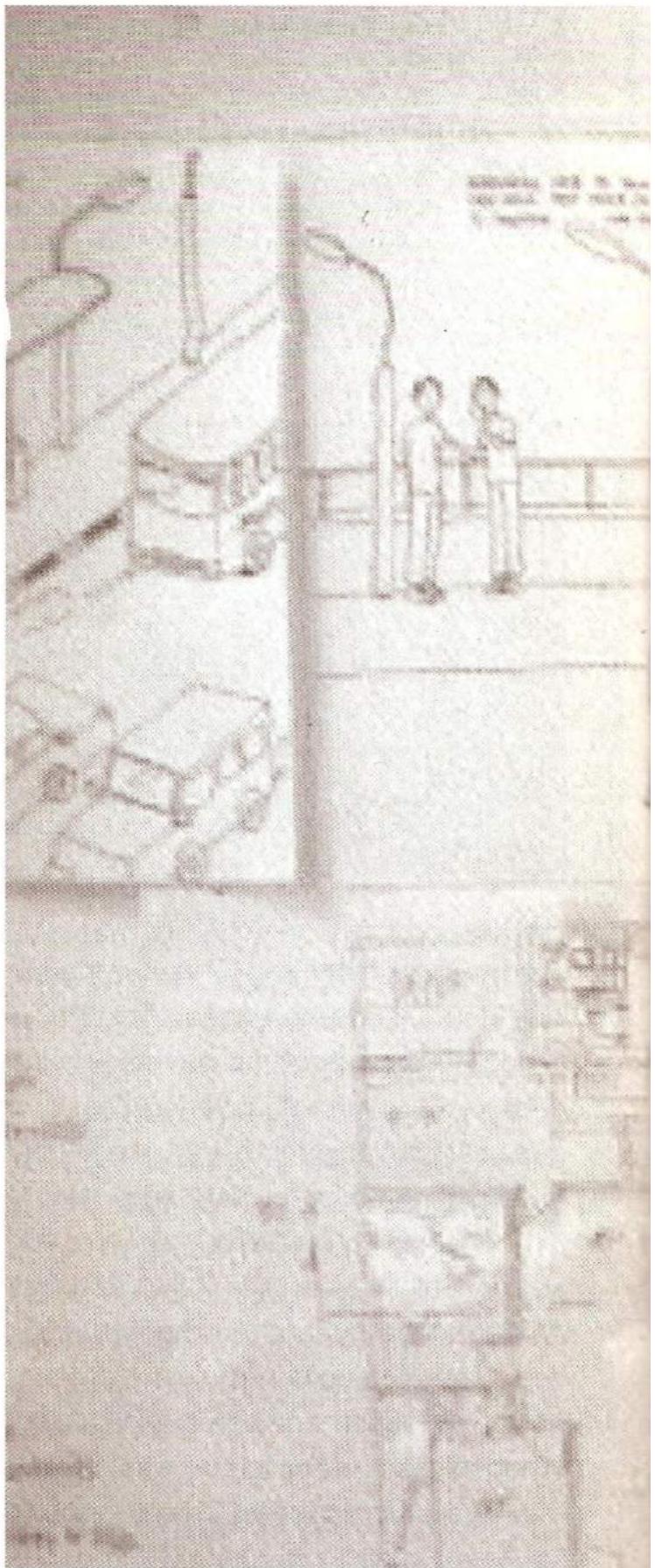
Jakarta dulu, yang ngiket kita pertama. Ade dari Jakarta, dia nggak bakal mau tinggal di Yogyakarta meskipun pernah sekolah di sana. Gua juga di Jakarta, meskipun gua asalnya dari daerah, dan gua tinggal di Jakarta udah lama. Nah terus Jakarta tuh nggak punya apa-apa walaupun ada Lontar (Galeri Lontar) ada Galeri Nasional, ada apa juga tetep aja dianggap nggak ada sama komunitas *art scene* di Indonesia. Walaupun ada pameran di Galeri Nasional, pasti orang tetep aja kalo orang mau ngeliat *art scene* ke Cemeti (Yogyakarta), ke Barak sedikit (Bandung). Kita nggak punya di Jakarta, walaupun komunitasnya

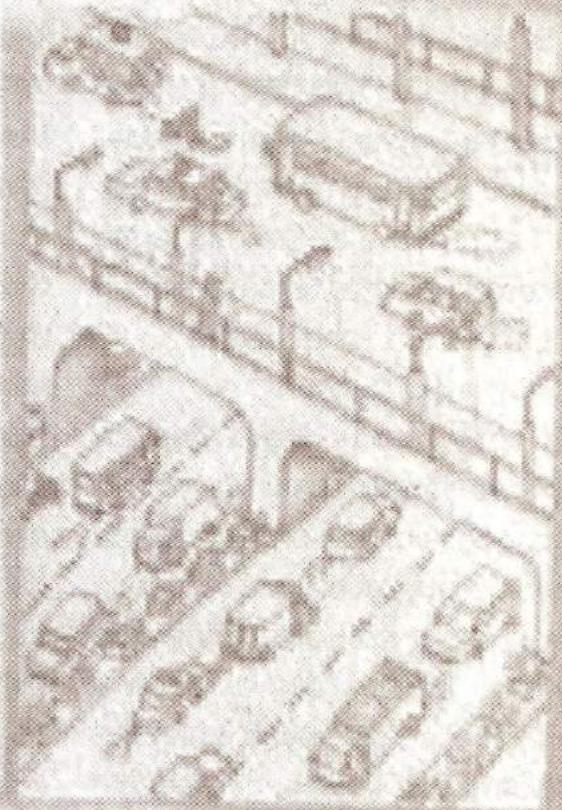
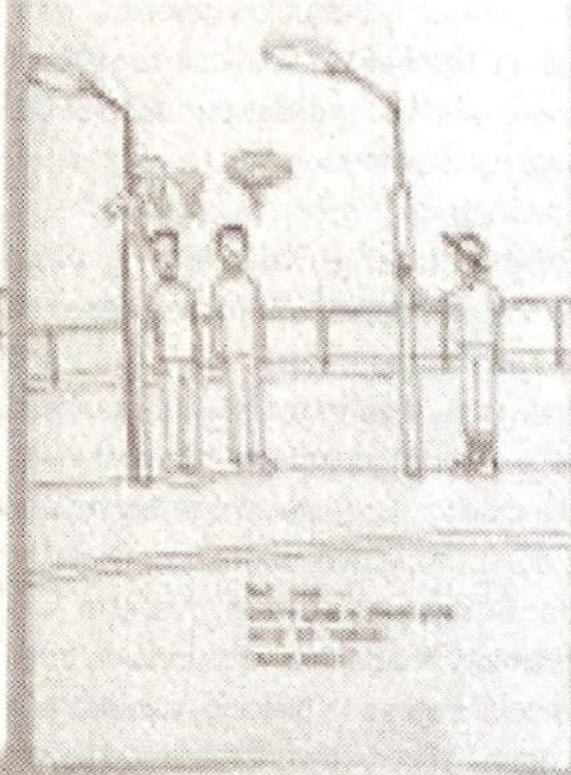
ada. Nah itu sebetulnya. Terus satu lagi yang menarik di Jakarta, dia itu sentral sebagai ibukota, tapi menjadi sangat daerah dalam *art scene* lokal... terpinggirkan... Nah kan itu menarik bagi kita, gimana sih, ada nggak survival-nya seniman-seniman Jakarta ini? Ada atau nggak sih? Gimana sih cara mereka survive? Ya terbukti dari 6 orang ini, kecuali si Ade (dia kan sempet 2 taun di Belanda), tapi yang 5 orang ini, mereka bisa survive, tapi survivenya tidak seperti seniman-seniman yang ada di Yogyakarta atau di Bandung... misalnya gua... gua nggak bisa secara *full time* menjadi seorang seniman. Nggak mungkin banget.

Jadi akhirnya harus ada excuse sama tindakan keseniannya. Kadang-kadang jadinya 80% waktunya lebih besar dipake buat kerja nyari uang, buat hidup, 20%-nya ya buat keseniannya.

Nah sebelumnya kan udah ada TIM (Taman Ismail Marzuki) sama Lontar (Galeri Lontar). Jangan-jangan komunitas ini (Ruang Rupa) emang komunitas yang nggak terakomodasi di sana... gimana tuh? He..he..he..

Sebetulnya nggak juga... Oki pernah pameran di Lontar, di Cemeti. Gua juga pernah pameran di Cemeti, juga di TIM. Cuma gini, jujur aja gua bilang, *art scene* di Jakarta tuh bobrok, karena mereka hanya ngeliat romantisme era '70-an. TIM kan yang paling besar di Jakarta... nah romantisme '70-an itu melekat sampe sekarang. Emang kita akui kalo gerakan kesenian zaman itu di TIM memang besar, tapi dekade '80-an akhir itu kan ancur, nggak ada sama sekali. Dan orang-orang yang ada sekarang di sana, di Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, ya cuma punya romantisme gitu, yang selalu ngeliat pada masa lalu... dan buat kita udah selesai. Terus Lontar misalnya... Lontar baik, cuma dia lama-lama menjadi institusi yang mapan juga... sementara yang muda-muda, yang nggak punya kesempatan banyak, untuk datang ke sana aja takut, segen duluan, bukan hanya buat bawa proposal pameran, untuk datang dan ngeliat pa-





meran di sana aja udah males. Bukan karena apa-apa, mereka emang udah terlalu besar... langsung menjadi besar, ketika baru berdiri langsung besar, di back up media. Di sini banyak galeri besar tapi mereka cuma ngeliat Yogyakarta atau Bali... kita mampus aja. Kalo elu mau gede, pengen bisa idup, apalagi secara finansial, ya pindah ke Yogyakarta aja. Liat aja Agus Suwage pindah ke Yogyakarta, Nunung pindah ke Yogyakarta, banyak tuh... he..he..he..

Nah terus kenapa sih begitu ngotot bikin *art scene* sendiri ...

Sebetulnya gua sih nggak bermaksud ngebangun *art scene*, gua cuma mau bikin *alternative space* aja. Kalo jadinya *art scene* yang baru ya terserah... Sebetulnya kejadian kayak gini nih... selama ini kan seni diliat sebagai sesuatu yang sakral, empu, sangat besar, dan berjarak sama masyarakat. Maksudnya hal yang remeh-temeh itu bukan art, terutama di Jakarta, sehingga seniman-seniman yang karyanya bermain-main itu tidak terakomodasi. Dan bagi kita di Ruang Rupa, kita ngabangun ini sebagai taman bermain kita bareng-bareng... itu aja... dan kita nyoba untuk ngebangun perspektif baru untuk ngeliat seni: apakah seni itu harus diliat dengan cara-cara lama kayak gitu, bahwa seniman itu besar, seniman itu suci atau gimana, yang buka pada depokan. Apakah kayak gitu? Kita nyoba redifinisi lagi, sehingga kawan-kawan yang kerja dan masuk di sini ketika poster

Iwan Fals kita anggap sebagai sebuah karya seni mereka awalnya bingung, padahal kan pengakuan itu sebenarnya sama. Nggak ada jarak. Hanya tugas kritikus aja yang kemudian harus membahasakan kembali. Makanya kita nerbitin *Karbon*, biar bisa ngeliat permasalahannya dengan cara yang lain...

Sampe sekarang orang-orang yang maen ke sini apa semuanya anak-anak seni rupa atau gimana...

Nggak juga, ada anak-anak teater, ada anak-anak film, ya macem-macem... ada aktifis-aktifis... Soalnya secara legalnya ini kan LSM, makanya mereka ngeliat kita sebagai kawan mereka. Karena kita jadikan ini sebagai *public space*, ya udah semua orang pada dateng. Dibuka aja, kita nggak bisa menolak. Kadang-kadang kita bantu mereka dengan fasilitas yang kita punya. Ada Komnas HAM dateng ke sini, ya udah kita bantu. Jadinya ada interaksi. Pernah tuh ada yang dateng jaringan yang kiri banget... wah pokoknya komunis bangetlah... Ada yang selebritis banget... ya kita sih cair aja... nggak ada semacam pengkotak-kotakan..

Sekarang balik ke omongan tadi... kalo asumsi seni yang agung dan luhur itu udah lewat, emang menurut Ruangrupa seni itu apaan?

Kalo kami mikirnya gini, berkesenian itu sama ama elu jualan kopi juga, buka warung, jadi pekerja, seorang pegawai

bank, atau pegawai negeri, sama seniman itu sama aja... cuma yang beda profesi aja... Yang bikin kita berpikir lagi bahwa sebenarnya kita nggak perlu mikirin yang agung-agung itu karena gini lo... persoalan kesenian kita di sini telah terlambat sekian tahun, dengan tanda kutip yah, tapi sekarang kita harus nyoba untuk berdiri dalam posisi yang sama. Padahal kalo kita mau fair kita harus jujur aja bahwa seniman-seniman kayak Affandi itu udah selesai masalahnya. Kalo visi berkesenian menurut kita... apapun bisa lu jadiin kesenian, gitu aja, asal elu punya persoalan yang personal, ya sangat individual sekali...

Nah kalo kejadiannya asumsi ini kemudian menjadi sangat berjarak sama publik gimana...

Kadang-kadang kita selalu udah bikin jarak sama asumsi publik... tapi kita di Ruangrupa punya pengalaman... publik itu nggak bodoh. Persoalannya sekarang gimana seniman... yang paling sulit bagi kesenian kita karena kita selalu berpikir bahwa masyarakat harus punya apresiasi terhadap kesenian, padahal seharusnya seniman yang harus punya apresiasi terhadap masyarakat. Jadi sekarang harus dibalik. Tesis ini terbukti waktu kita bikin project publik art waktu jak@rt bulan Juni kemaren. Ada si Santo (Santo Banana). Dia itu karyanya sangat personal. Kalo orang liat... wah, gila banget... dia ngumpulin sepatu bekas selama enam

Kita selalu berpikir bahwa masyarakat harus punya apresiasi terhadap kesenian, padahal seharusnya seniman yang harus punya apresiasi terhadap masyarakat. Jadi sekarang harus dibalik.

bulan, terus dia ngebangun tenda dari kain perca, tendanya gede banget dipajang di Monas. Di dalem tenda itu, sepatunya ditaruh semua di dalem, ditata semua. Yang unik dari kejadian itu, di sana kan ada tukang parkir, gembel, ada semua orang yang kita anggap awam dalam dunia kesenian, tapi ketika karya itu ada di situ... mereka tau itu karya seni! Itu kita kaget. Waktu mereka nanya, "*ini karya seni ya mas...saya suka sekali nih...*"... sampe akhirnya mereka bilang mau ngejaga karyanya... dan mereka minta sepatu. Si Santo kan memang pengennya begitu. Pokoknya mereka tau sekali kalo itu karya seni. Itu yang kita bilang bahwa sebenarnya kalo seniman itu bisa lebur dalam persoalan komunitasnya sendiri, sebenarnya masyarakat nggak bakal jengah ngeliat itu, nggak merasa berjarak juga. Gua yakin sama hal itu... seperti waktu bikin mural di Bundaran HI... itu kan tempat nginepnya gembel... anak-anak selama seminggu ngerjainnya jam 9 malem sampe jam 4 pagi... itu kan waktu tidurnya

mereka. Nah mereka tiap anak-anak dateng malah ikut bantu-bantu, berpartisipasi, dan malah seneng ngeliatin. Mereka tau ini bukan sesuatu yang bagi mereka nggak penting...

Kalo ada pertanyaan-pertanyaan yang skeptikal yang ujung-ujungnya mempertanyakan fungsi praktis seni dalam kehidupan lu pribadi, buat lu gimana tuh?

Kalo gua pribadi ya kayak yang tadi awal gua bilang... berkesenian itu sama seperti kerja pegawai bank atau apaanlah... Nah pikiran-pikiran yang ada di dalamnya, itulah keseniannya. Pikiran ideal itu jadi berat karena ama kita dibuat berat. Tapi kalo dibuat ringan, misalnya persoalan kesenian itu sama dengan persoalan tukang baso yang jualan baso keliling dengan caranya sendiri, untuk survive. Gua pribadi ngeliat kesenian seperti itu. Gua punya cara-cara sendiri biar karya gua bisa survive, karena terlepas dari masalah makna atau hubungannya dalam konteks sosial dan sebagainya... termasuk masalah makna... itu persoalan lain... itu persoalan yang ada di luar dari itu...

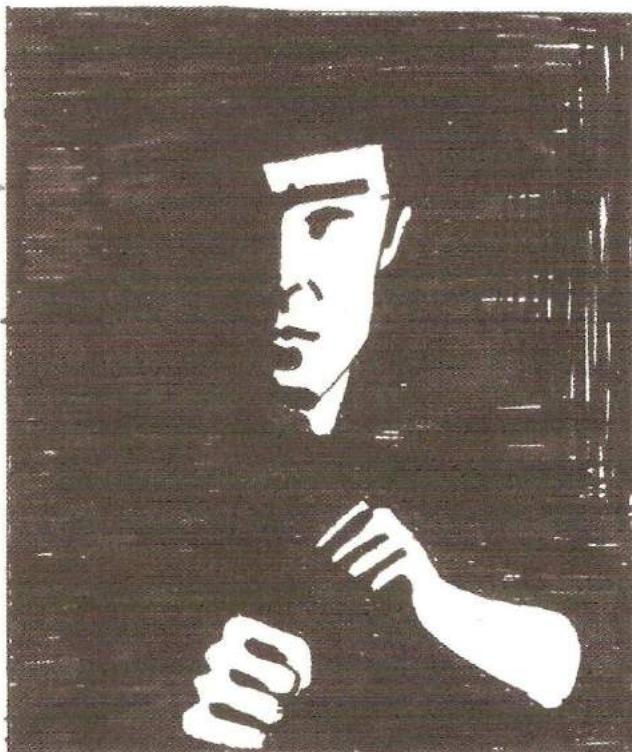
Ntar kalo lu mati lu punya harapan tertentu nggak untuk semua karya-karya dan segala macem yang udah lu buat...
Nggak...he...he... Gua bikin ginian buat ngisi hidup aja. Iya dong, si penjual baso juga kan sama aja. Dia menjual baso, ntar duitnya juga abis. Dia juga nggak punya

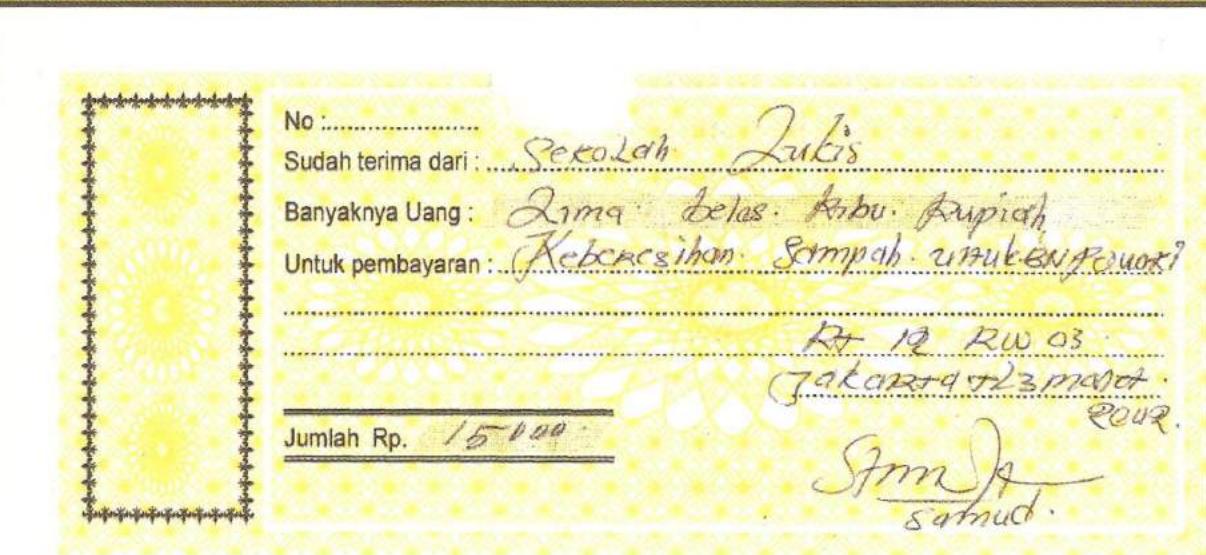
mimpi-mimpi kalo nanti basonya bakal dikenang orang... ha..ha...ha.. iya kan... Kafka juga bikin karya tidak dengan asumsi akan diterbitkan. Kalo dia nggak mati kita nggak bakal tau karya dia sampe sekarang...

Gua pengen tau RuangRupa ke depan bakal kayak gimana...lu punya bayangan nggak sih?

Gua nggak pernah berpikir sampe sejauh itu. Serius. Gua pikir kalo Ruangrupa bisa bertahan sampe 2 tahun aja, gua udah seneng. Gua nggak tau kalo kawan-kawan Ruangrupa yang lain. Gua nggak pernah berpikir ini bakal jadi sebuah institusi yang mapan. Gua punya pengalaman pribadi sih, ngeliat institusi yang mapan ketika masih mahasiswa. Kuliah, liat pameran, jaraknya sangat terasa. Jarak masuk ke sebuah institusi yang jadi. Salah satu ketakutan gua terhadap Ruangrupa itu dia menjadi mapan. Untung sampe sekarang dia tidak mapan... maksudnya dengan tanda kutip ya... kawan-kawan atau siapapun yang disini nggak merasa jengah... nggak merasa berjarak, semua bisa main di sini. Mereka punya keberanian untuk nunjukin karya mereka. Kayak si Adit waktu ngasih tau karya temennya. Temennya itu belom pernah pameran, tapi karyanya asik, dan serius ngegarap karya videonya. Sampe akhirnya dia berani ngasih presentasi di sini. Hal-hal itu yang paling penting bagi kita. Jadi ke depan, kalo bisa bertahan sampe

10 tahun ya sukur aja, biar aja gini terus...
Lu pernah ngebayangin nggak Ruang-Rupa bakal ada di Solo atau Kudus...
Nggak mungkin. Kalo kita mau kita buka RuangRupa ini di luar Jakarta, kalo nggak Bandung ya Yogyakarta. Karena pertama murah, biaya hidup murah, biaya semuanya samalah. Ngontrak rumah di Yogyakarta, 2 juta dapet yang bagus; di sini nggak mungkin. Sehingga kita baru ada setelah Januari, setelah 7 bulan kita berdiri baru punya tempat kayak gini. Di sini aja kita baru sebulan. Lagian perang suci kita kan itu: mau ngedukung *local artist* di Jakarta... misi sucinya gitu... ha...ha..ha...





Ruangrupa was formed in January 2000, initiated by six Jakarta based artists. The main idea was to provide the intimate and autonomous art workspace for artists to live and work intensively within a period of time. This all started from the lack of working space for artists in conducting their explorations, having meetings and presenting their works and ideas, especially in Jakarta.

In the beginning, we tried to open all possibilities to start the activities, every where we could start to work. A lot of artist in Jakarta were involved, they supported us with everything that they could afford – links, equipment, places, etc -. Artists who work in ruangrupa have different activities besides being active as an artist and in ruangrupa, they are for instance also active as web\graphic designer, film production, art criticism, and as students. From this diversity a lot of possibilities and support to run the artist initiative, have been sprouted.

Our aims are to develop a form of analysis of **the autonomous individual artistic work against the background of identity**; furthermore, ruangrupa works on **theoretical investigation** about art in relation to social and cultural elements. The other mission is to **develop the structure** that the artist could deal within his or her own **working process** as an analyzed process instead of producing one. This kind of orientation intends to deal with **art as more than an industrial commodity only**.

The Instruments to be used to reach the goal:

- Searching and exploring fresh ideas on art and culture
- To create an open working space where creative potentials flow freely and independently, and where the artist can intensively express their individual ideas.
- A place for dialogues for interdisciplinary thoughts such as between fine art, literature, sociology, philosophy, and other.
- Being linked up with interdisciplinary organizations in a strong network – national, regional, international – without any bounds.

Program

1. Artist residency program.

The artist will work in an individual project. These programs are open for artists [groups and individuals, Indonesian and foreign] who address visual art as a 'cultural practice' which is interesting for debate. It is also open for those who are enthusiastic about sharing different points of view, exploring and interacting with the Jakarta urban surrounding.

The residency program could run over a span of a maximum of one month. In the end of the working period there will be a presentation of the works. ruangrupa will only except a maximum of three artists in residence in one year.

2. Workshop program/art project on certain subject [decided by *ruangrupa*]

The starting points for the themes in this program are issues, which are still and could be interesting for a debate in visual art and social - cultural discourse, especially pertaining to Indonesia. The workshop will involve a number of artists from different backgrounds, they will stay and work together in the ruangrupa space.

Realizing that the autobiographical automatically interrelate with the cultural background/ identity, a form of analyzing the autonomous individual artistic work against the background of this cultural identity-autobiography will be developed. The theme/subject could mediate the interaction and exchange between the artist that come from different backgrounds. It will open the potentialities for the collaborations and individual works.

The member of the ruangrupa artistic team will decide the theme for the project through the research and documentation.

The workshop will run for about one month, during the workshop research and documentation of the project in the forms of slides, videos, will be arranged by *ruangrupa*. 200-2001 projects: Public art, urban printing, video art/multimedia and 'Jakarta Habitus Publik'-a public art project.

In the period 2000-2001 artists from Indonesia [Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta] and International [Germany, France, Argentina, Belgium, South Africa, Netherlands, Finland, and U.S.A.] participated in the two programs mentioned above.

3. 'Karbon'.

Our four monthly journals have been published as an output media for all of *ruangrupa's* activities, to reach and stimulate debate and discussion among broader audiences. The journal focuses on art and essays on culture that relate to the art projects, documentation, and research of ruangrupa. It is very important as well for the

development of Indonesian art critics in general because there has not been an art journal [visual art especially] published since a long time ago [the last art journal which is published was in 1948 called 'Seniman']

The first two editions of 'karbon' are published in two languages [Indonesian and English], and it was distributed for free. The journals were distributed in few big cities in Java and all cultural center /organization all over Indonesia. Outside Indonesia the journal were distributed to few organization and artist initiative in different countries related to the RAIN network: The Netherlands [Amsterdam], Argentina [Buenos Aires], Mexico [Mexico city], India [Mumbai], South Africa [Durban] and Mali [Bamako].

4. Exhibition space

ruangrupa exhibition space was set up in the end of year 2001. A space for presentation has an important role for artists in Jakarta, especially for artists with fresh and experimental ideas currently there are lacks of possibilities to show the works in conventional spaces. The space is not meant as a gallery space, which means without tendencies to see art as a commercial commodity. The interaction working process with the space is very important, the artist can intensively and intimately express their individual ideas. There will be maximum six exhibitions in the ruangrupa space in one year.

The Artist

We are open for any (visual) artist (group and individuals, Indonesian and foreign) who are willing to work in cooperation with us and are enthusiastic about sharing different opinions; exploring and experimenting the artist's interaction with Jakarta urban life.

The participating or invited artist for the exhibition, artist residency and workshop/art project program will be selected and decided by the artistic team of ruangrupa.

Space and Facilities

The space is situated in the south part of Jakarta, in one of the busy areas. Tebet area is one of the strategic places in south of Jakarta, with business and also residencies. 260 square meters space, with one residential room with shared shower and toilets. There are three different spaces for exhibition and working, in total approximately 100 square meters.

ruangrupa will provide the artists who take part in the program, a working and living space in Jakarta. We also provide use of equipment [computers] for image developing, video/sound editing, and Internet access.

Network and support

Besides support from many artists who have been working together with us, there are number of positive co-operation from art and cultural Institution/organization in Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta, e.g.: Jakarta Art Institute, National Gallery Jakarta, Cemeti Art Foundation [Yogyakarta], Barak Art space [Bandung].

In some project we work together and have some support from cultural center of foreign countries in Jakarta, for instance Japan Foundation, Erasmus Huis, French Cultural Center, British Council and Goethe Institute.

The networks developed earlier through the member's individual relations and those advantages really support *ruangrupa*'s activities in the form of networks, financial support, information, and publication.

RAIN (Artists Initiatives Network)

www.r-a-i-n.net

In the year 2000, *ruangrupa* become one of the partners in RAIN Artists Initiatives Network. The RAIN network has been very important for *ruangrupa* to endorse and facilitate the art and cultural exchange, [both on south – south level, and south – north level] and the research/documentation program.

The partners at RAIN network are: Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten Amsterdam-Netherlands, Los Mutantes [Mexico City, Mexico], El Despacho [Mexico City, Mexico], Opén Circle [Mumbai, India], Centre Soleil d'Afrique [Bamako, Mali], TRAMA [Buenos Aires, Argentina] and PULSE [Durban, South Africa], and CEIA [Belo Horizonte, Brazil]. Facilitated by Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten Amsterdam-Netherlands [State Academy of Fine Art Amsterdam], the network focused on the set up the virtual network, and the exchange artist, information, publications and documentation.

Other priorities of *ruangrupa* are to build a better network between the different cities and islands in Indonesia [National]. Furthermore we are building on a net of relations with other countries in Asia [Regional]

Organization

Artistic team – the team who will work conceptually and decide on all the yearly program –

The members are:

Ade Darmawan, Elim Welisangiang, Hafiz, Indra Kusumaatmadja

Irwan Ahmett, Ronny Agustinus, Reza Afisina, Ugeng T Moetidjo

Director : Ade Darmawan

Secretary : Elim Welisangiang

Treasurer : Oskar

Space [working space and exhibition] : Reza Afisina

Journal 'Karbon' : Ugeng T Moetidjo

Ronny Agustinus

Workshop and Art project : Hafiz

Indra Kusumaatmadja

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A Cold Beer Conversation and 3 Years After¹

Translated and Edited by
Amanda Katherine Rath

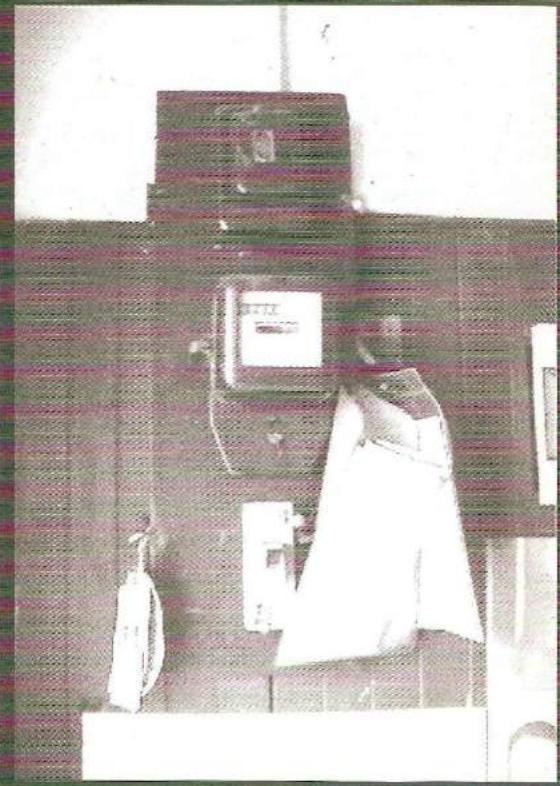
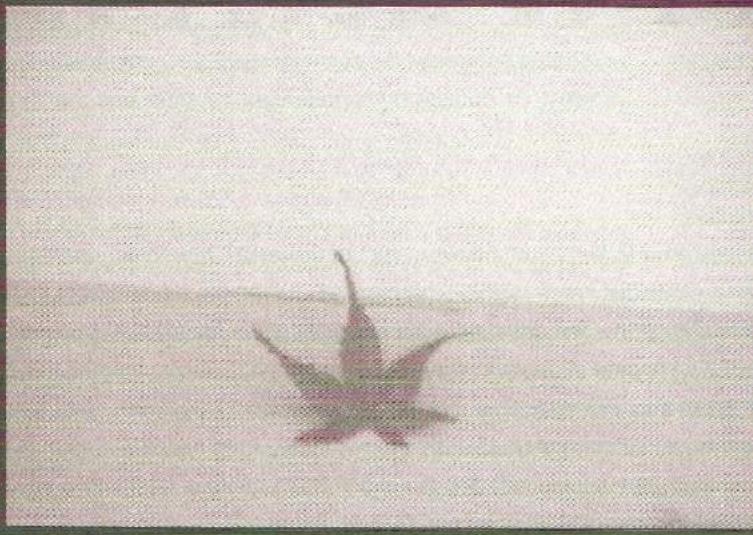
"(...) very few artists want to, and are able to, breathe in the "metropolitan air" of Jakarta. For them, Jakarta is merely shelter or a kind of space to be occupied without necessarily knowing about or understanding that space itself. In the end, chaos. Jakarta, as a prime location for developing a broader path for artistic process (not commercial value), is faltering in molding itself (...) Artists in Jakarta form a very heterogeneous community: in their origins, attitudes, character, views, concepts, etc. For me, this is both positive and negative: positive because there is freedom to behave as an individual, negative because, in my view, they [artists] "exploit" Jakarta. The groups in Jakarta (independent, as well as connected) are no more than groups of people who want to take advantage of the situation. (...) For me, this mentality, in effect, makes it difficult for a movement to expand and grow in Jakarta. Almost all of the arts institutions in Jakarta are always in pursuit of status (the artists, art officials, critics, etc.). For me, a painter's mission, as an unconditional responsibility, is to paint and present their work to the public.

(...) Now, if talking about the current rage of consciousness/awareness – raising art (*seni penyadaran*) that most artists now produce, you don't have to believe in it. The problem is not one of belief, but if you understand what I said in my letter, you'll know how to react. They stammer about and then suddenly want to pose as the "spear head" of change in the current atmosphere. All of this masks the real situation. And [artists] are repeatedly trapped within this milieu. Must I speak with them about the issue of believing in it or not? No!!!

(...) Sorry, I don't want to speak so bluntly. And indeed I can't blame the artists 100 %. This can be thought of as being a mutually determining cycle. Our job is to break this vicious cycle."

THE ABOVE LETTER, written by painter Oky Arfie Hutabarat (May 10, 1999), is part of an email discussion between Oky, Ade Darmawan (at that time living in the Netherlands), Hafiz (artist in Jakarta), Ade Tanesia (editor of *Aikon* in Yogyakarta), and myself. The discussion, which eventually included 20 members (mainly passive participants) and covered such topics as iced tea to International Situationism, can be considered a pioneering step in forming a

"different" kind of arts organization. At the end of 1999, the same time Ade came back from the Netherlands, the discussion of this illusory space materialized face-to-face over beer and wine, among six "chosen" people. Not long after, the beginning of 2000, Ruang Rupa was established.



Without direct reference to Oky's letter, Ruang Rupa's principle working platform revolves around the issue of the "urban", particularly that of Jakarta, without "using it as a space to be occupied without knowledge, or understanding, of the space itself"; because "our job is to break the vicious cycle". Although the process of doing so is not as heroic as Oky's concluding sentence, after two years we probably need to reevaluate what we believe that 'space' is, and what the 'job of art' is.

We? Wait a second. That word is actually tricky in summing up what Ruang Rupa is all about. From the beginning, we, ah sorry – 'those of us who founded Ruang Rupa' decided not to combine all of our individual differences into one "communal activity". In fact, I can still remember the initial debates and the quarrels that made for a tense atmosphere in the café where we [the founders of RR] had discussions.

Besides the six founding members (at that time some of us worked for an economic-politic magazine that was almost bankrupt –and has since gone bankrupt, an entertainment business, a chicken meat packing plant, and an automotive factory), Ruang Rupa eventually added a writer/painter with the express job of handling the journal [Karbon]. Last year there was a constant revolving door of friends who helped out, whose total working time for Ruang Rupa far exceeded that of the some founding members. For example, I probably show up at Ruang Rupa the least. With all these differences, [the word] "we/us" becomes risky and insufficient. For example, Oky mentioned "the freedom to act as individuals" (email May 10, 1999). Ade added that "we have to be subjective and make an interesting work of art that opens up new levels..." (email May 19, 1999), and Hafiz questioned "imperatives that

up until now form the public criterion concerning the arts" (email Dec. 23, 1999).

'Public' versus 'individual', 'Us/We' versus 'Me/I': a classic problem yet to be resolved within the debate(s) of Indonesian modern art. But apparently, the people who hang out at Ruang Rupa are oriented toward the 'I' and 'the 'we'. Even if modernism can be viewed as a social pathology. This is because, the hierarchical mentality contained in such a binary cannot yet be directly eradicated by bringing 'the self' into a wider scope: 'I' shifting to the 'we', the individual toward the group, the artist toward the community of art. Even though we are told that we are now in a comprehensive process of democratization, it is as if the hierarchy of superior/inferior is already latent in this country. In fact, it's as if many people feel more secure living within such a hierarchy. For example, two artists once brought an exhibition proposal, complete with financial details, to Ruang Rupa. Hafiz resolutely rejected it (what is Ruang Rupa anyway: gallery, funding, department, or what?), explaining that Ruang Rupa is an organization – he used the words *artist's initiative* – providing work space, materials (not many), that allows 'me' and 'you' as independent individuals and as equals to meet, debate, and work according to our own convictions. If art is meant as a process and an interaction of ideas, then it's the result of which that is exhibited. Hence, the work of art is not the primary aim. Now these

two painters seemed uncomfortable with our offer. Apparently they preferred to assume the role of someone looking for work, carrying with them CV's and diplomas, and exhibiting a mentality of an inferior approaching the throne of a gallery owner.

This is just one example of the latent superiority can be seen in what actually happens in the practice of 'socially aware art'.

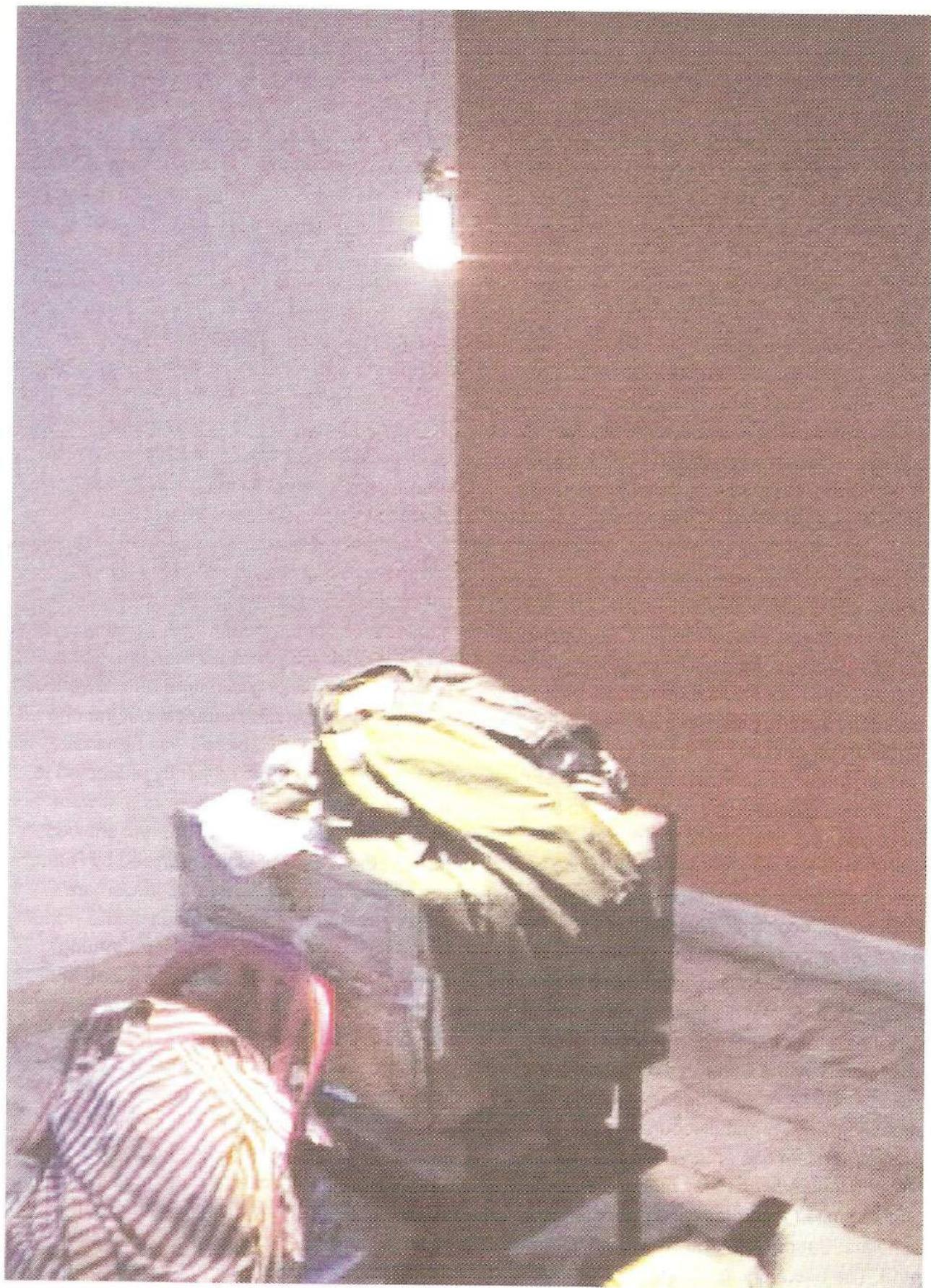
The question: who needs to be made aware? Obviously the people, workers, farmers, the poor, the repressed, etc. Who is going bring them to this state of awareness? This answer is also clear: the artist. Here, the hierarchy of superiority is even more obvious. Certainly 'socially aware art' often inflates complex words such as, 'participation of the masses', 'communal work', etc. Why must artists involve the repressed in artistic projects for the sake of making them 'aware'? On the other hand why not? For example, the farmer compels the artist to abandon their privilege as artist and wake up at dawn to turn and plant the soil. This without it entering the news, without the opportunity to be made into video art, without the Philip Morris Award, Nokia Art Award, Etcetera Award, etc. And this to continue until the harvest season arrives, and the cycle begins again, repeating for say about ten years, for the sake of making the artists 'aware' of the [farmer's] bitter-sweet situation. The hierarchical position of 'aware art' not only considers the artist as 'already enlightened and the farmer as 'not yet enlightened, but at the same time also implies 'art' as a higher level of existence compared to farming. More than likely, the farmer doesn't know anything about social revolution or Rivera's murals of the struggling classes; but on the other hand, what does the artist know about seeds, manure, plant disease, the harvest and the distributors? We should realize the differences and parallels between these two forms of knowledge [farmer's and artist's] if true

democratic participation is going to grow. And here is the criticism of art communities that, with a black or white view of modernism, often offering a simplistic solution of 'communal work' versus 'individual work', while ignoring the psychological basis of these two things, as well as confusing the difference between individualism and egoism.

Ruang Rupa's project, included in this Gwangju Bienalle, is thus not a work by 'us' but work by several 'I's or 'selves'. Although, Ruang Rupa is 'I' oriented, it does not immediately follow that Runag Rupa sides with the 'urban' (Sure, in the latest trendy definition, those who support the 'we' are usually identified with 'tradition, village, harmony, art for the people – and because of that...' 'progressive-proletariat'. The proponents of the 'self' are branded with 'modernity, urban, fragmentation, art-for-art – and thus bourgeois-decadent' [really!]). Ruang Rupa wants to see urban as a space that, like it or not, should be supported while also being critiqued with the same intensity. The urban is neither a sickness – although scarred here and there. Nor is it an angel of salvation – although it constantly draws a yearly migration after *Lebaran* [closure of Ramahdan] of those looking for work. Those who want to curb the flow of urbanization by serving up images of the 'broken city' and the 'peaceful village' are merely toying with standard myths, in no way approaching reality. Repeating what I wrote one year ago in the culture journal *Mitra*: "It is not necessary to deny that our image of the traditional peaceful village and stories of wise indigenous knowledges are romantic compensations for our own cities already in decay..." In art, the intersecting 'skeletons' of concrete and the cowboys of Marlboro-country billboards that fill canvases are only inverted reflections of the structure of the *Mooi Indie*'s 3 dictums: mountain, palm tree and rice fields. This framework still exists. The same foolishness from Indonesian films of the 1970's

to the primetime soaps of today that always portray Jakarta through: noisy traffic, the national monument, the traffic circle at the Hotel Indonesia, high-rises, street lamps at night, the flicker of the bustling city center, cafes, discothèques, loud music. This portrayal is both the fulfillment of desires and the confession of sins. On the one hand, glamour is the center of depravity that must be reviled, and on the other hand it must continue to be presented without cessation through TV to the remotest corners, while preaching a dream: "this is the real life, come this way...". In this way, stereotypes as well as hypocrisy are strengthened. Efforts to disrupt the hierarchy of center-margins are subverted, thus strengthening its power. The urban, 'the Center', is openly scorned while secretly desired, or as Ade Darmawan has stated:...why are artists more proud of exhibiting outside the country (although in remote countries) rather than exhibiting in Indonesia (in Banjarmasin for instance)?"

Clearly, Ruang Rupa does not mean to give into stereotypes or hypocrisy, but [in order to avoid this], the urban should be defined first. Despite the fact that there is no uniform answer, I will say that the urban is "a place where people consume reams of newspapers for the sake of stagnant debates about the discourse of the market and the market discourse of Indonesian art, while at the same time the price of rice in the traditional markets is more expensive than in the supermarkets. Where I can still find a rare Clash CD at a second-hand market, while activists write anti-free-market essays, the stock-market index goes up half a point". Like it or not, the urban is a harsh market, people crowding in on all available capitalism. Yeah, the market: like sex, is often viewed as a type of sin while recognized as the 'greatest human achievement'. We often hear and maybe even express: "The market colonizes! It forces submission! The market alienates!" and at other times we ask ourselves:



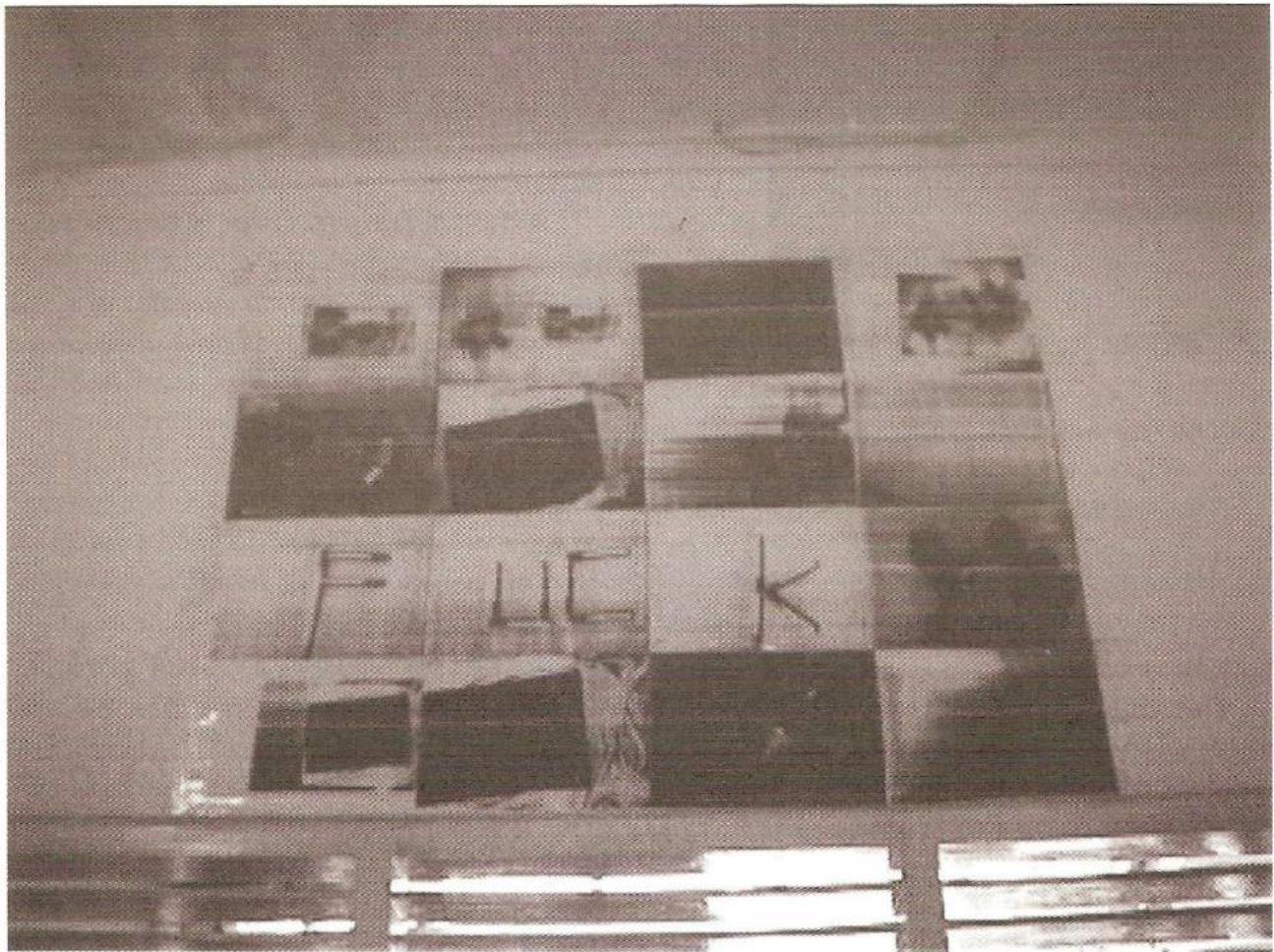
"What would we do without the market?". True, the market is full of problems, but to become a romantic ascetic searching for shelter in the clouds, a place that is not-like-a-market, and live there while ridiculing the working public, is not the answer either (in fact, it is through their working experience that people can better understand what actually happens in the world of wage earners).

Surprisingly, in these increasingly feeble times, there are still people bent on dichotomizing the problem of urban as black or white. I think people should watch Wong Kar-Wai's films. In his films, Hong Kong or Kowloon's disordered reality is depicted accurately, but it is not viewed in a sociological or ideological way that objectifies and dichotomizes this reality. The characters in the film view themselves as personal and authentic selves in handling their problems within a urban social milieu. although what they do and say is insignificant and without meaning [in the scope of history]. They don't carry out heroic acts, hunger strikes, or suicidal bombings, but they also don't want to give into a situation that hinders their desires.

Like them, genuine art will always exist in the tension between two constructions: the meta-narrative of social reality and micro-narrative of personal authenticity. Those who delight in criticizing modernism and capitalism in all social, economic and political aspects – devotees of postmodernism – often lose sight of the fact that postmodernism began from within the desire to reveal hidden histories, personal histories, small narratives, that have been sublimated by the linear path of modernism. However, what has happened is merely a repetition. The grand discourse of postmodernism has entered the journals through long and complex quotations, and chalked full of footnotes (and refers to the same scholars: Baudrillard, Foucault, Said, Derrida, etc.). The overarching discipline of cultural

studies has become another mainstream just like Developmentalism of the 1980's, as well as anthropological documentary research paid for by international capitalist firms. What then is the distinction between *Terompet Rakyat* and billboards from the New Order?³ Again, this is a reversed image of the same kind of thinking: political meta-narratives replaced with another political meta-narrative, as if they have forgotten that history consists of physical and intellectual currents that exist on their own; as if they have forgotten what historian Sartono Kartodirdjo asked long ago: where are the histories of those who are not associated with major events? The stories and histories of the ordinary people, the small or 'minor' narratives are missing. This is why Hafiz is concerned about the "hidden things".

I've discussed with Oky our need to re-paint still lifes and flowers, and certainly with a different aim and intention. Ade argued that, quoting a colleague from Eastern Europe, "still lifes and abstraction are political", such that "I believe that a painting of nature and flowers can be seen as a form of resistance, but the one who later buys it is Habibie's wife hahaha..." (email July 21, 1999).⁴ I recently attempted to re-paint flowers, a vase of flowers that went against the grain of convention, and showed them in the first exhibition organized by Ruang Rupa (as a fund raising event), at Cemara Gallery in March of 2000. Alongside the works by political satirists Toni Volunteerero, Agung Kurniawan, and Alit Ambara, who joined in organizing the exhibition, the works of Ruang Rupa seemed more subjective. For example Hafiz's painting in which a figure of a woman outlined in blue embraces a figure of man depicted in red and black. Within a non-perspectival space, are a white iron bed, bottle, tree, flaming red house, a sketched long bench, a naked couple, dark lines in the background – in short: an intimate landscape, perhaps a landscape of love familiar to both Hafiz and the

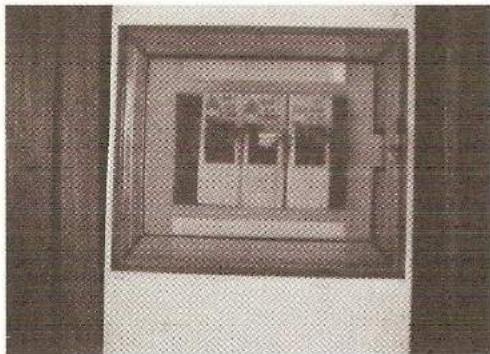


'woman in the painting', without feigning feelings or artificial romanticism.

Since that exhibition, Ruang Rupa has publicly stood on its own. Using a Lilia Nursita's room at Pondok Labu as a base, the artists in residency program was formed. Soon afterwards, [Ruang Rupa] borrowed a space for the first project: a work studio for some "Romantic Rothko" that –without making light of his help to Ruang Rupa – is a prime example of how contemporary architecture can go in the wrong direction (or more precisely, the wrong landscape).

This first project problematized art in public spaces. Ruang Rupa invited and brought together two art communities from Yogyakarta, namely Taring Padi and Apotipk Komik, that at time were known for having a view of art that took an oppositional position as a point of departure in order to work in an aspect of public

space in Jakarta of their choosing.⁵ To be honest, the choice of these two groups was not based on very deep observation of other communities that also deal with public spaces. The incessant news about them, in addition to being friends with members of the groups, influenced our choice. Recognizing this weakness, this project was fortunately balanced by criticism in Ruang Rupa's own journal *Karbon*. In the inaugural edition of *Karbon*, edited by Ugeng T. Moetisjo (editor of said edition), launched his criticism, the essence of which argued – of course it should be remembered that the sentence that follows is my own interpretation – that 'beauty is divine inspiration and the final reality of a work of art after repression, as deeds of heroism within an age that deviates from human needs'. In short Ugeng did not agree with the way these two communities and Ruang Rupa dealt with art in



public spaces.

This inaugural edition of *Karbon*'s (November, 2000) got varied reactions from both those with polite praise and those who wanted to subscribe. Most of them criticized Ugeng's use of language not commonly used. Hafiz knows some 'leftist oriented' activists who just threw it away, maybe because of the language, maybe the content. A senior artist sent an email criticizing Ugeng's use of lofty language. However, I often wonder, is *Karbon* really that unintelligible? For example, *Karbon* is a bilingual journal, Indonesian and English. A friend of mine who helps with translations, Theresia Anggraeni, , after skimming the article, understood the essence of UTM's "Case File: Beauty versus the Times" as a first attempt (trying out of ideas). Theresia works as an accountant at an international school and has nothing to do with art theory. Worst case scenario: it is the intention and taste of the self proclaimed learned reader who...

Committed to 'decentralization' per se, *Karbon* is sent to far reaching places [in Indonesia], such as Kutai and Medan (North Sumatra). Who knows how it got there, but *Karbon* is also circulated in Bali; several email

requests for subscriptions have been sent from there. Due to the Rain Network's channels, it has reached the Netherlands and Belgium. *Karbon* is also read in Barcelona (thanks to Marco Kusumawijaya), and the response by an urban architect from Indonesia – who is currently doing research in the area of Urban Geo-strategy/politics at the Polytechnics University in Cataluna, Barcelona – was included in the second edition. Wherever in the world it may reach, all areas are equally important for the planting of ideas/proposals.

Alright, so that was an egotistically written bit of chronological history, that only wishes to underscore that there is not a unified voice within Ruang Rupa (this can be seen in the publication of the *Rijksacademie van Beeldende Kunsten: Silent Zones: on globalization and cultural interaction* (2001, pp.164-169), where our work was chalked-full with Hafiz's meddling, and you can guess the outcome...a mess!). The similarity among members of Ruang Rupa is found in our differences. But, before this writing becomes too full of self-importance and resembles the slogan 'Unity in Diversity'⁶, maybe it's better if I shift to a more theoretical subject. If it's true that Ruang Rupa's unity is in

its diversity, what is the thread that binds each person's individual work in Ruang Rupa? How can the "mission of breaking the vicious cycle" bring about something concrete? The answer is actually already within Oky's email: "the mission of a painter is to paint", although it requires clarification as to "what painting is" in a situation that is in complete disarray (because Oky is a conventional painter in terms of technique, therefore the term 'painting' should be understood in wider artistic sense, because as Ade has already witnessed in *Trouble Spot Painting*, the definition of painting has shifted from the problem of 'form' towards the problem of the 'way of thinking').

It's as if the old debate over "art for art's sake" and "art for the people" hasn't been exhausted. What can be done about this conflict that continuously haunts art to this day? I propose that an "art for art's sake" is impossible. Such a principle implies a futile activity. Is it possible that something can be done merely for the sake of doing it? Can we paint only for the sake of painting itself? Can there be such absolute autonomy? Among those who defend the idea of 'art for art's sake', I have never come across someone who paints only for the sake of painting itself. Among other reasons, some paint to articulate a driving energy, some to express ideas and concepts, and others to assist in the fathoming of life; some consider painting as a religious act, others as a way to make money. Not one person has argued that they paint for the sake of painting itself!

Moreover, [Indonesia] really doesn't have a history of 'art for art's sake' that was convincing (and perhaps, along that line, has yet to produce credible works of 'art for the people'). From the beginning, the oldest understanding of art was not just concerned with aesthetics and form⁷ but also with function. This to the extent that Prof. Sudjoko once stated that only legitimate art in Indonesia was *seni kriya* or

'applied art or artisan's art'.⁸ Although is it not necessary to go to such extremes, I believe that we have never really negated function in creating works of art. And I became really aware of this when I met with Hafiz and Ugeng one afternoon. We were sitting in the shop at the Goethe Institute talking about Ruang Rupa's proposal. After working hours, a young blond girl who hadn't been working there long, came and sat down with us. Hafiz already knew her: a German girl who wanted to know a lot about Indonesian art. The conversation went on about 'Indonesian culture' and took up the whole afternoon. In the middle of the conversation she jotted something down in her notebook and [showing it to us] asked "What's this?" Almost all of us said "a transistor radio". She answered: "No, it's just a circle with a square and three lines". I smiled at hearing that answer. Maybe someone from Europe whose history contains names like Apollinaire or Clive Bell would have an answer like that, but in this country I don't think so. The issue is not a matter of not understanding/misunderstanding art theory, but rather 'mentality', *Weltanschaung*, or world view. An object is rarely neutral, but has associations with something outside of itself, and these associations, more or less lie within the realm of function (or functionality of an object). This is connected to the "absurdity of existence": something that exists without having a purpose outside of itself. The application of such an idea, not based on 'faith' in the notion—historically in Indonesia – often only results in incongruity or nothing if not futility.

Because the nihilism of 'art for art's sake' makes no sense (at least here), art must be for something. It certainly has a purpose. In this regard, "art for the people" is more logical, although not much of a better choice, if we keep in mind the inherent hierarchy contained within "art for the people".

Subsequently, if the one is nonsense, and

days. Neutrality of this sort is itself nihilism, and should be buried in its grave, along with the philosophy of the ivory tower and romantic artists. The middle that I speak of is the liminal state in which 'anger' becomes 'beauty', 'abuses' become 'inspirations'. A place where we know that art cannot save the world, but that it can inspire people to save the world themselves. The middle as a form of inspiration-transfusion that at least wasn't tertebak. Without this type of 'middle', one can only produce so much window dressing, or 'sloganiastic sermons'.

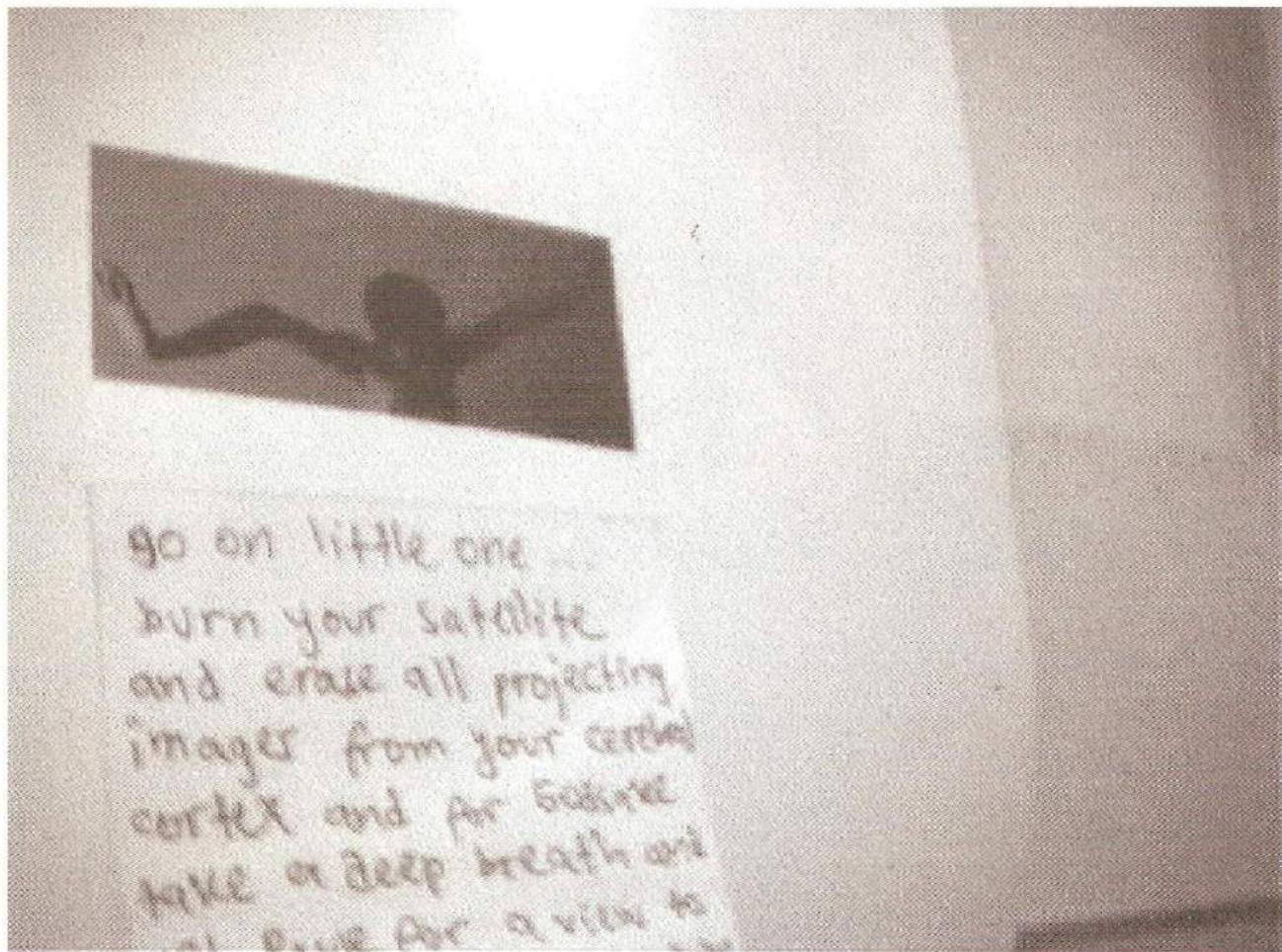
So, have we reached the ideal? Obviously not. Directing Ruang Rupa as a an on-going artist's initiative hence has already caused the personnel to decrease their artistic work. Ruang Rupa must be in contact with all of the complexities urban dwellers face in general, from the day to day business like contracting a house, electric and telephone bills. We are in the midst of trying out a new system that enables art work, a journal and administration to proceed without the one interfering with the other.

If there is consistency in Ruang Rupa's work up to this point, it is the attention toward 'urban space' and 'small narratives'. These two points are linked with Ruang Rupa views of *visual culture* and *fine art* itself. *Visual Culture*, broadly speaking, is related to urban space, and usually becomes the main theme of our Artists in Residency projects. At the same time, *fine art* is more related to the small narratives of the artist, their own works of art, albeit going beyond the boundaries of conventional *fine art*. For example, Ruang Rupa's video project that extended for a period of months and involved members from Argentina, Belgium, Germany, and Jakarta. For this project, video was considered as a phenomenon of visual technology of urban space, and the individual artist's video art works as "small narrations". Within the scope of *visual culture*, Ruang Rupa

does not view a work of art as immediately becoming *fine art* just because it is art, and from works of applied art (printing, packaging, banners, etc.) as *low art* simply because it is not art. In this case, it is more a matter of intensity and creative energy. The postmodernist zealots – in an effort to depose the domination of "*high art*" – boisterously celebrated the return of "*low art*" from its marginal position, as if without critical consideration. In this regard, we can see in every tradition of *visual culture* various levels of aesthetic, creativity, passion, and tension in each work.

The notion of an urban space is probably already clear. This city is already absurd to the core, from the governor to the singing beggar. On Monday mornings the narrow streets are packed with people leaving for work, as if they are the hardest working people in the world. But come Thursday the traffic flows more easily. There are not so many people. Where are the people that were going to work on Monday? Are they taking a day off? Or have they forgotten that Thursday is a work day too? Quoting from our proposal for the curators of this Biennale, people living in Jakarta have forgotten that plastic is not a banana leaf – it can't be thrown away as easily as a leaf with the hope it will go away on its own. They have also forgotten that, unlike dirt, asphalt and bus floors don't absorb spit.

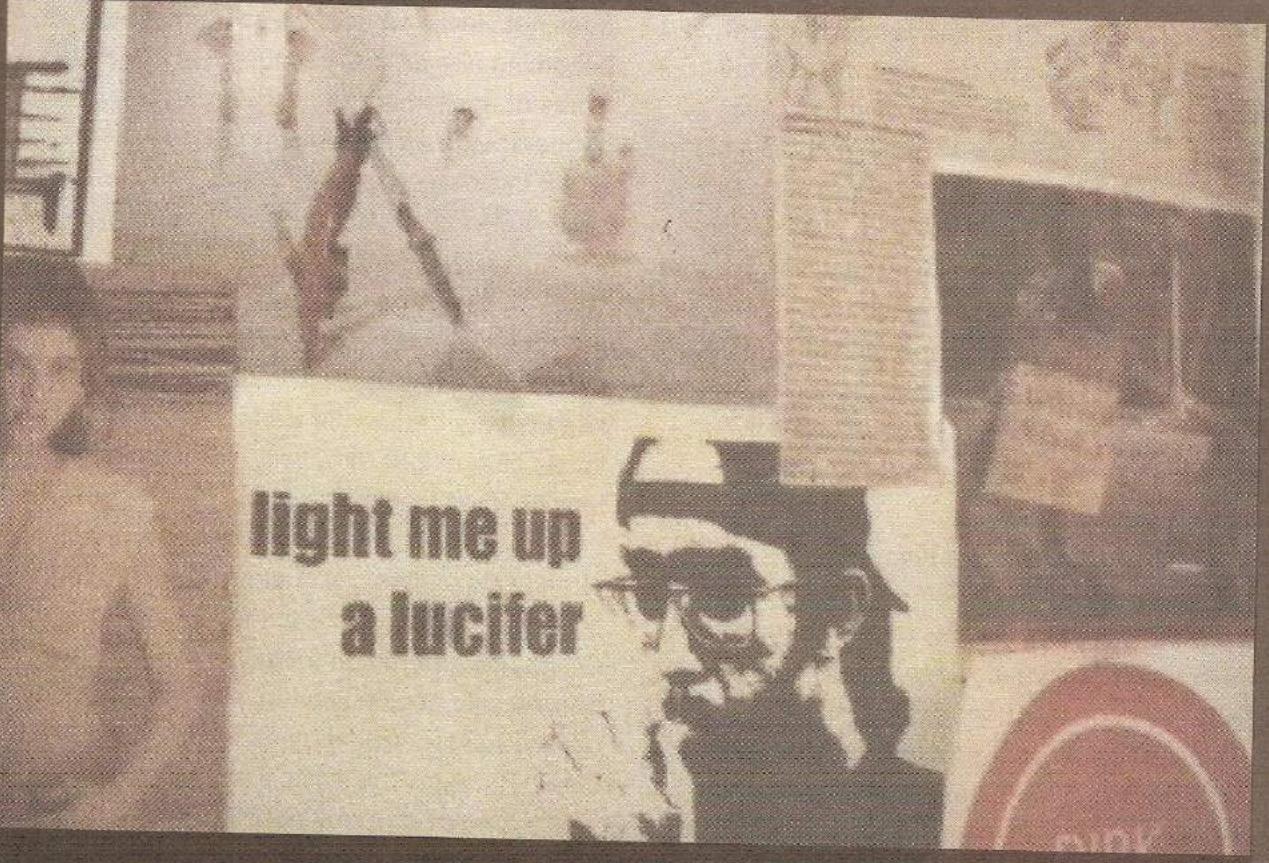
It can just be amnesia, a critical condition suffered by urban people. The way to healing is none other than one's own process of remembering and memory. In fact, within what is called 'collective memory', each person has their own space that cannot be occupied by another person. Chairil [Anwar] wrote "Solitude is one's own fate" (1946), not just for the sake of writing a love poem (that later became one of the most beloved poems of Indonesian literature), but also to reveal the irony of modernism that was assailing developing countries. The calm and quiet of the sheltered



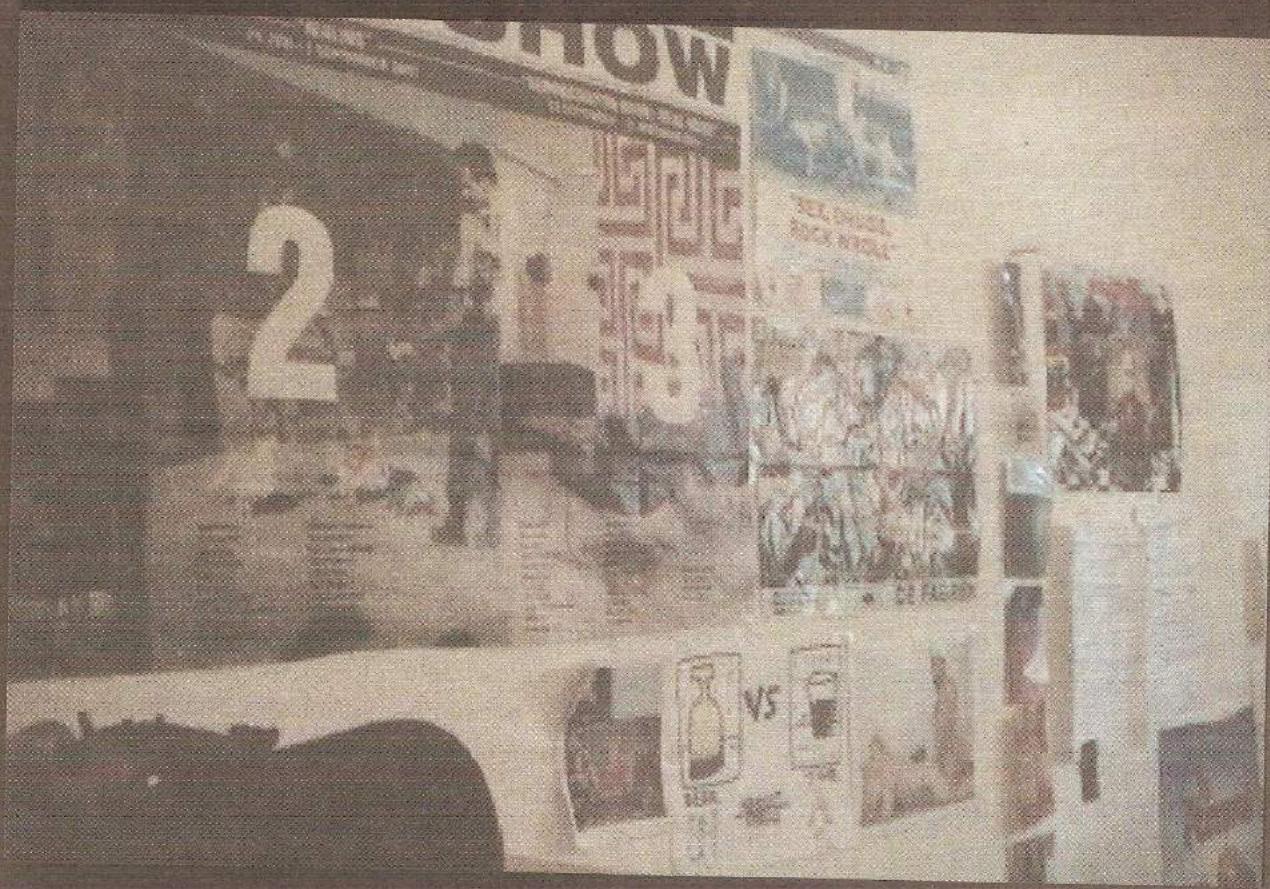
communal life was suddenly thrust into a clamorous world wherein people must choose their own path in isolation. Meaning is no longer a given. "There is a new kind of person, and can be called 'I'" (Chairil Anwar, 1948).⁹

If Ruang Rupa persists with the issue of 'little narratives', this is because of such a realization, a realization that communal cannot stave off the pace of modernism, 'I' is irrevocably present and cannot be taken back. This does not imply that life itself has lost meaning. It is exactly at this moment in time when politics are done with a small 'p' and pragmatism with a 'P', that meaning is lost when it lost its solitary position. It has been drawn into alliances, projects fortified by regulations and laws, echoed in such slogans as "the revolution is not over", "give substance to independence", and "push on with

reformation'. Ruang Rupa, for example, is not a group of people that depicts Jakarta via the contrasts between generalizations of poverty and wealth. Those who are fond of such generalizations, are usually those who give them meaning, and these can be divided into two things: between the side of power (read politics) and the opposition (read activist). Poverty is often stereotyped by the police as the source of criminality, as if they have forgotten the blue collar crimes that have proven detrimental, and carried out by those who cannot claim poverty as their motive. Right now activists regularly support the realm of criminality under the pretext of poverty, as if they too have forgotten that by doing so, they bolster the stereotype created by their competition (police and politics). Generalizations, black and white definitions,



**light me up
a lucifer**



hallucinating when I wrote to Reinaart van Hoe (an artist from Europe): "artists can no longer work in public space for the sake of being aware (*penyadaran*), because social awareness these days is constructed by mass media and NGO's. Artists can no longer offer entertainment, because there are many forms of media more entertaining like yellow journalism and television. Artists can no longer disturb or shock the public, they are already disturbed with everyday economic problems and shocked by oft-changing political policies. Therefore, the only way for artists to enter the public domain is through a more intimate approach, speak about more personal issues. This is because the public is not an anonymous entity, but a group of many people who have names, histories, and feelings of their own" (28 Nov. 2000). Ade relayed our concerns to Gertrude Flentege (Rain coordinator) and added "It's quite strange that people become accustomed to shocking things. This is rather depressing and in fact makes us rethink the position of the artist in this kind of situation".

What is the position of the artist in this state of affairs, and in history. Yes, the history of modern art in Indonesia is truly a vast project, let along the history of 'post-modern' art; the emergence of which was colored by the scandal of the biennial sham that surprisingly has never been seen as an important historical note. People are busy, once again searching for innovation of medium, for the sake – they say – of struggling against the stagnation of form and content. It is as if they have forgotten the 'champion of the revolution' is nothing new, but the inspiration that they convey has never stagnated. Behind all this, behind the inflated facade of history that has never been critiqued – while eliminating all dishonesty that yields only peddlers of ornamental garbage – Ruang Rupa tries to work, as a group of individuals who have their own little narratives, within the confines of a wide, yet narrow space. This

without having to be narrowly categorized as this or that. Ruang Rupa tries to be as aware as possible that the dream of an ideal culture is a fantasy, that a living art comes from within memories – small, personal, insignificant, simple, and sometimes ignored, that without these, life has no meaning; and without memories people would eventually die. They would kill themselves.

Ronny Agustinus – Dec. 2001

Notes of the author:

Cold Beer Conversation is the title of Hafiz's email message dated July 15, 1999. On July 22, 1999, Ade argued that the beer *Corona* was marketed in Spain under the sexy label of *Coronita*.

If there are those who feel this writing is longwinded, confusing, ridiculous, narcissistic, and doesn't explain anything, this is true. This is because sometimes the activities of Ruang Rupa are also like that. Lie is sometimes like that. Besides that it is raining today and I can't go anywhere, and the only to kill time is to write this long treatise. While listening to the rain fall, I am reminded that *hujan* or rain is synonymous with RAIN in English and with the acronym RAIN (or Rijksakademie Artists Initiative Network in Ruang Rupa slang) that flows over with feelings of postcolonial guilt...he..he...he.



stereotypes – these are not what Ruang Rupa carries out. We are more drawn to the gray jungle of Jakarta, taking from the plethora of bazaar stickers stuck everywhere such as our second project: *Urban printing: The Personal in Sociological Interpretation*. During the process of completing this project, came across a newspaper agency called "Failed Hope" (*Harapan Gagal*) in the area of Kampung Melayu, a district crowded with buses. It was as if the owner of the agency was ridiculing his own failed dreams in a big city. A name like that is not just a name, but holds within it a story, hope, and the confidence to make fun of oneself. What is so important about one agent among 1,000's in Jakarta? But it's places like that that perhaps inspire Ruang Rupa.

Alexander Sudheim (an artist/musician from South Africa invited to participate in our Urban Printing project), remembering the history of his

country overshadowed by institutionalized racism, was taken aback by a sticker "Janitors against Apartheid" which he found in Blok M. Sudheim later commented that it was "The weirdest shit I picked up there". Concerning the work of Ruang Rupa, he also commented (quoted from within the spirit of narcissism): "I have respect for the initiative spirit and natural abilities of everyone involved to mutually interact in clever and creative way, not like the crazy paranoia of Europeans who are convinced that if you don't force someone to 'work' within the most puritan understanding of work, the project will never be finished.". Regarding the urban he stated: "Space is like water, and in Jakarta we are like a group of fish in a shallow mudhole, each one trying to permeate our brains and bodies. But don't forget, the lack of oxygen can also effect interesting hallucinations...". But I wasn't

hallucinating when I wrote to Reinaart van Hoe (an artist from Europe): "artists can no longer work in public space for the sake of being aware (*penyadaran*), because social awareness these days is constructed by mass media and NGO's. Artists can no longer offer entertainment, because there are many forms of media more entertaining like yellow journalism and television. Artists can no longer disturb or shock the public, they are already disturbed with everyday economic problems and shocked by oft-changing political policies. Therefore, the only way for artists to enter the public domain is through a more intimate approach, speak about more personal issues. This is because the public is not an anonymous entity, but a group of many people who have names, histories, and feelings of their own" (28 Nov. 2000). Ade relayed our concerns to Gertrude Flentge (Rain coordinator) and added "It's quite strange that people become accustomed to shocking things. This is rather depressing and in fact makes us rethink the position of the artist in this kind of situation".

What is the position of the artist in this state of affairs, and in history. Yes, the history of modern art in Indonesia is truly a vast project, let along the history of 'post-modern' art; the emergence of which was colored by the scandal of the biennial sham that surprisingly has never been seen as an important historical note. People are busy, once again searching for innovation of medium, for the sake – they say – of struggling against the stagnation of form and content. It is as if they have forgotten the 'champion of the revolution' is nothing new, but the inspiration that they convey has never stagnated. Behind all this, behind the inflated facade of history that has never been critiqued – while eliminating all dishonesty that yields only peddlers of ornamental garbage – Ruang Rupa tries to work, as a group of individuals who have their own little narratives, within the confines of a wide, yet narrow space. This

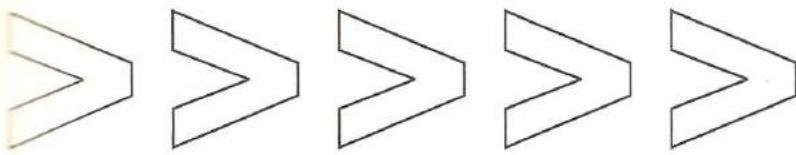
without having to be narrowly categorized as this or that. Ruang Rupa tries to be as aware as possible that the dream of an ideal culture is a fantasy, that a living art comes from within memories – small, personal, insignificant, simple, and sometimes ignored, that without these, life has no meaning; and without memories people would eventually die. They would kill themselves.

Ronny Agustinus – Dec. 2001

Notes of the author:

Cold Beer Conversation is the title of Hafiz's email message dated July 15, 1999. On July 22, 1999, Ade argued that the beer *Corona* was marketed in Spain under the sexy label of *Coronita*.

If there are those who feel this writing is longwinded, confusing, ridiculous, narcissistic, and doesn't explain anything, this is true. This is because sometimes the activities of Ruang Rupa are also like that. Lie is sometimes like that. Besides that it is raining today and I can't go anywhere, and the only to kill time is to write this long treatise. While listening to the rain fall, I am reminded that *hujan* or rain is synonymous with RAIN in English and with the acronym RAIN (or Rijksakademie Artists Initiative Network in Ruang Rupa slang) that flows over with feelings of postcolonial guilt...he..he..he.



Footnotes have been added by the translator/editor
Amanda Katherine Rath.

⁵ The original term is *seni penyadaran*. It roughly translates into awareness art, yet within the context of a type of 'art for the people' meaning artists make art specifically in-tune with real issues of certain groups of people. *Penyadaran* is difficult to translate as it forms of type of verb such as the 'making of awareness art'.

⁶ *Terompet Rakyat* refers to a work created by Taring Padi, one of the many groups of artists/activists that emerged after the fall of Suharto. TP uses mediums of mass communication such as posters and billboards, murals, etc. as a way of making inexpensive art that is also accessible to, and easily understood by, larger segments of the population. TP, as well as some of their colleagues, have been criticized for aestheticizing politics and reconstructing a populist ideal of 'art for the people' that replaces one ideology with another. The use of billboards in this case is ideally in opposition to (among other things) New Order Developmentism that ushered in a rapid growth in multinational advertisements as part (or symptom) of the modernizing process.

⁷ Paintings of nature-scapes, or landscapes are often considered a conservative and decorative form of art, favored by the elites and has been associated with Commercial art, Suharto's and later his replacement Habibie's political party which 'ruled' Indonesia for over thirty years. Commercial art is also associated with 'safe' art. In other words, it was supported by and often consumed by not only the 'ordinary' growing middle class, but also by government officials.

⁸ Both Taring Padi (sharp tip (spear) of the rice plant)

and Apotik Komik (Comic Pharmacy) emerged during the chaos of the fall of Suharto. Members of both groups were previously involved in student activism which helped, in no small part, to bring Suharto down. Their leftist ideological orientation has been compared to that of Lekra (communist cultural organization during the 1950's and 1960's) which was purged along with the Communist Party after Suharto came to power.

⁶ "Unity in Diversity" was (and may perhaps still be) the national slogan depicting a national culture consisting of diverse ethnicities, languages and religions. It was used by the state and the military through education indoctrination as a means of disavowing the different needs and concerns of the many for the sake of the center.

⁷ The original terms used are *keluhuran* and *kegunaan*, two Javanese words concerning expectations about and appearances of forms. These terms cannot be directly translated as they also have spiritual and ethical connotations. The editor has used approximating, and unfortunately too simplistic, English terms.

⁸ The first Indonesian to receive a Doctorate in Art. Indonesia has no Dept. of the History of Art.

⁹ Chairil Anwar (1922-1949) was a young poet who emerged during the Japanese Occupation and became well known for his work during the war for Independence, while working in Jakarta. He and his group argued the outsider position of the writer/artist, and declared the individuality of the self as the necessary position of that outsider. It was the 'modern self' that Anwar depicted in his many poems entitled 'Aku' or 'I' (1943). Chairil's poem has come to mean both a declaration of the self and the birth of a nation in the throes of modernization and history.

IF GOOD ART IS FOR ALL,
THEN SURELY IT SHOULD
START ON THE STREETS
WE WALK.

