

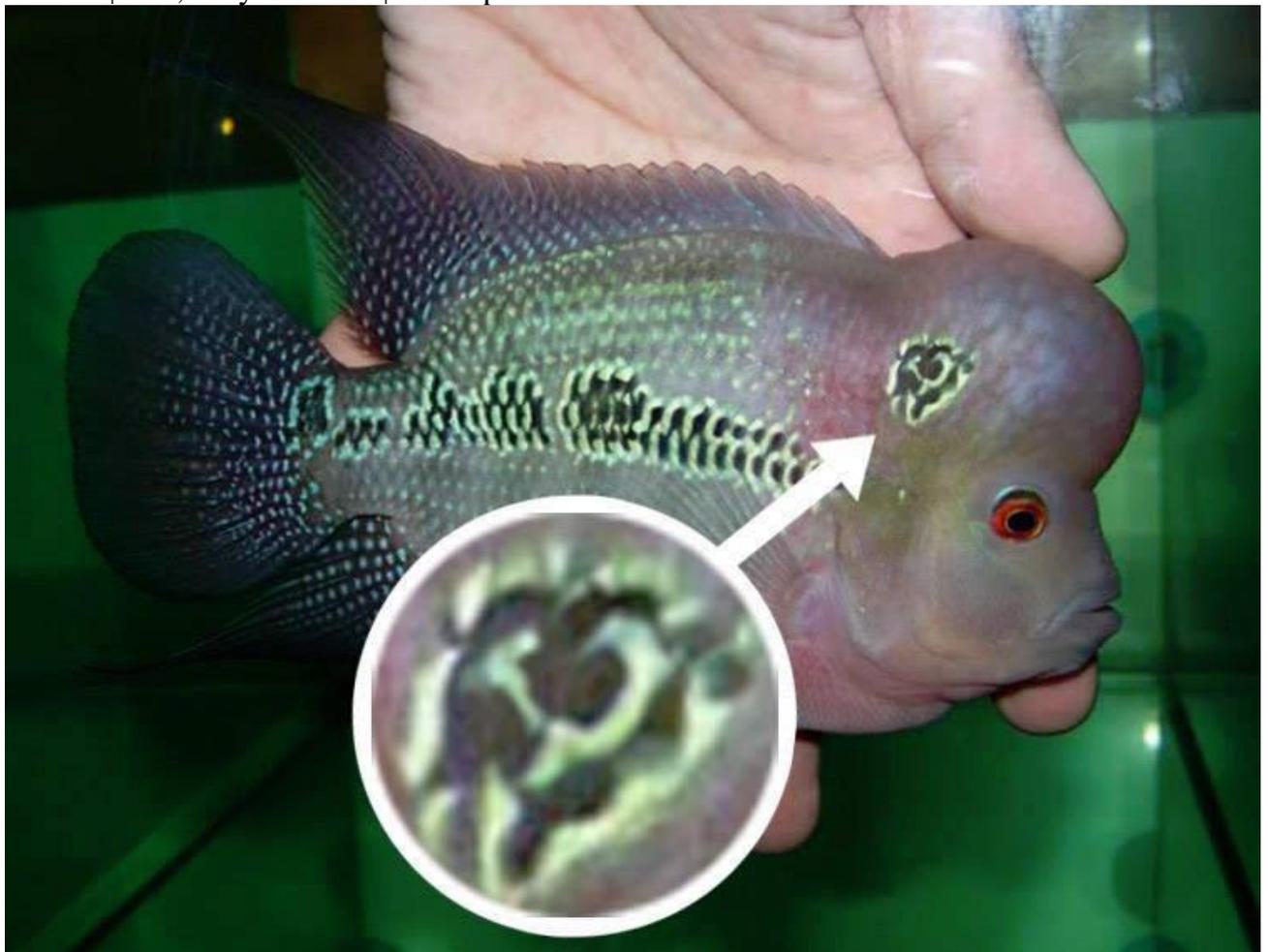
Pencatat	IVAA
Tanggal	6 September 2016
Tautan	<a href="http://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2016/05/10/agan-harahap-communist-fish-and-epic-photos.html">http://www.thejakartapost.com/life/2016/05/10/agan-harahap-communist-fish-and-epic-photos.html</a>

# Agan Harahap, communist fish and epic photos

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A doctored photo of a flowerhorn fish with a hammer and sickle on its forehead(Taken from Agan Harahap's Facebook /-)

Indonesia's social media enthusiasts were shocked recently by a picture of a flowerhorn fish bearing a hammer and sickle on its forehead. The markings seemed uncanny and unlikely, but nonetheless elicited a wave of responses from Facebook, Twitter and Instagram users.

But was it really a wonder of nature?

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The image of the flowerhorn fish was in fact manipulated using Photoshop by Yogyakarta-based visual artist Agan Harahap, known among his peers and art lovers as a master of photo-editing. In the 2014 presidential election, Agan's photo manipulations, intended only for fun, were used by spin doctors to stir up campaign stories and went viral on social media.

“It started out with my project for Ruang Rupa in 2012 for their Top Collection #3 exhibition. The exhibition itself is about how we respond to Indonesian photography today. I responded with how social media has changed photography,” Agan explained. Agan observed how being photographed with the famous had always been a cause of pride. “Back in the olden days, when you went to somebody’s house, you could immediately see the pictures in the living room of the homeowners with some celebrity or government official. Nowadays, people might not show those kind of pictures at their houses, but they keep them on their phones.”

His Instagram celebrityhood came to life when he spotted that his friend’s phone had a folder entitled “Celebrity Friends” where the friend’s photos with celebrities were stored. “I was competitive and wanted to make my own ‘celebrity friends’ pictures but with international celebrities,” he said, laughing.

Agan began creating images of himself not just standing side-by-side, but actually “interacting” with the likes of Pharrell Williams, Rihanna, Sting and many more. His photo-editing does not always include him; sometimes it’s as simple as putting international celebrities in very Indonesian settings or holding Indonesian products. Indonesian politicians who have graced his Instagram account include presidents Jokowi, Megawati, SBY and many more.



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“I don’t get into serious trouble from my photo manipulations, and that’s because I always ‘play’ in the right corridors and can be held accountable for all the work that I do,” Agan said with confidence regarding his playful, sometimes risky, hobby.

In the “Jakarta Biennale 2013: Siasat”, Agan exhibited a series of photos from Indonesia’s history entitled “Sejarah X” (History X), “taken” by a fictional palace photographer named Amrizal Chaniago. The “undocumented” photos were really manipulated historical photos featuring Indonesian historical figures combined with those from pop culture of the same era.

“I remember there were some people who claimed to have seen the photos before. I just laughed. I also manipulated a picture of Sukarno and Marilyn Monroe for the exhibition. A few days later I got a call from Bung Karno Foundation and they inquired whether they could have the photos for their documentation. I explained that the photographs were artworks and apologized. Thankfully, they understood,” he recalled.

As an artist, Agan’s work voices his response to what happens in his surroundings, and it’s the same case with the flowerhorn fish with the communist symbol on its forehead. “I was a bit emotional when I read the news that a t-shirt seller in Blok M had been arrested for selling a [German thrash-metal band] Kreator t-shirt. They don’t even know what Kreator is, and they arrested this seller for selling a t-shirt with a picture of a hammer and sickle under treason allegations. That prompted me to manipulate the fish picture as a response,” Agan said.

At press time, Agan’s “communist” fish post had been shared 3,651 times on Facebook.