



Man 1: "Already packed down there. Climb, bro."
Man 2: "Hurry up. Look out! Station beam!"
Man 1: "Jump, bro!"



COURTESY JAKARTA BIENNALE 2009



Tremors shake Jakarta. A bridge breaks and is severely damaged, while an accelerating train approaches. [In this critical moment, here comes our superhero]. [He is capable of saving everyone]. [Except those on the rooftop].



COURTESY JAKARTA BIENNALE 2009



Husband: "I'm going now, honey"
Wife: "Do you have money for the fare?"
Husband: "I don't. But, that's easy, honey."
Wife: You rode the train roof, didn't you?



COURTESY JAKARTA BIENNALE 2009



Chess club: Residents play chess beneath the Tebet overpass in front of Tebet Station in South Jakarta. The event is part of the Jakarta Biennale 2009 art festival.

JAKARTA BIENNALE

Chess park at station front yard

Proditia Sabarini

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Amidst the screeching and honking of cars and the rattle of trains passing by, dozens of men sat on benches under a South Jakarta overpass in Tebet. Oblivious to their noisy surroundings, the men were lost in thought, contemplating their next move in a game of chess.

One would think that the noisy lot under the overpass would be the last place for people to concentrate on a game of chess. But for these die-hard chess fans, who work and live near the Tebet train station, the lot is their unofficial outdoor chess club, which even International Grandmaster Utut Adianto and Haryadi Sucipto have frequented.

Artists Saleh Hussein and the art collective Kudaponi, which consists of Yusmario Farabi and Aprilia Sari from the indie pop band The White Shoes and the Couples Company, have for a long time noticed this unlikely hang-out place.

The area is not a designated park. The city administration had fenced the area to prevent street stalls from occupying this area that has both high traffic and pedestrian activity.

There is no gate to enter the fenced lot. Two missing bars from the fence are the entry to the "chess park".

Living in Tebet and frequently visiting the RuangRupa gallery in the same area, the artists noticed people playing chess on run-down wooden benches inside the iron-fenced lot.

This, in addition to Saleh and Yusmario's love of chess, inspired the artists to refurbish the area.



Check: A chess player makes his move during the Jakarta Biennale 2009.

Collaborating with local residents, they built new wooden chess tables and painted murals with pictures of pawns on the overpass pillars.

"We've always noticed this place and we think it has character and a potential to be a great public space," Sari said.

The three artists did this as part of the Jakarta Biennale 2009. Titled ARENA, the festival this year highlights the issue of public space and aims to bring art into public places.

After participating in workshops during November on site-specific art, Saleh, Yusmario and Sari immediately thought of the chess place.

"There are so few park spaces in Jakarta. It's weird how the city administration has never noticed this area's potential as a park and instead fenced it in," Sari said.

They started working on the murals last week.

On Thursday, the chess ta-

bles were ready. The three artists designed the tables to be easily disassembled, as local resident Taufik Hidayat said that the city's public order officers do still conduct raids.

"As people are not supposed to be inside this lot, we would have to clear up this place when the officers come," he said.

Sari said that by refurbishing the chess park, they hope that local residents can make use of the city space more comfortably.

Taufik said that people started to play chess there when the construction of the overpass was completed, in 1992.

He said that chess champions Utut Adianto and Haryadi Sucipto have sometimes come to the area to scout for new talent. Taufik also said that teenage chess wonder Masruri Rahman once played chess under the overpass with his father, a bajaj driver.

Do you really want to ride on top?

Proditia Sabarini

THE JAKARTA POST/JAKARTA

Two men raced to get on top of the train carriage. One succeeded but his friend was too late and hit a wall while the train was running at high speed. The man on the roof was left with only his friend's limb.

This tragic story is only fiction, illustrated in a comic strip by art collective SERRUM, but the inspiration for it was real.

Participating in the Jakarta Biennale 2009 site-specific art project, nine artists from SERRUM - Muhammad Gatot P., Eko Bimantara, Arif Widiarso, Arief Rachman, R. M. Herwibowo, Ludzfi Sabdakir, J. J. Adibrata, Gunawan Wibisono, Ary Suprayogo and M. Sigit Budi M - used the dangerous train-roof riding as inspiration for their work. The art event, titled ARENA, highlighted the issue of public space and

encouraged artists to bring art into public areas such as parks, bus terminals and train stations. Some 15 works are displayed across the city for the event.

Titled *Di atas lega bertaruh nyawa* (Spacious on top, risking life) the group satirized the phenomenon in violent but ironic illustrations, depicting tragedies that happen from riding on top of the train.

The group, all Jakarta National University students, made a small book of comic strips, stickers and postcards, which were given out to train passengers at Jakarta stations. They also exhibited their illustrations at the Jakarta Kota Station in West Jakarta.

The artists were putting up posters of their work at the Jakarta Kota Station Wednesday. Passersby stopped to see the illustrations before continuing on their journey. The exhibition is scheduled to run until Feb. 28.

"We printed comic books, stickers and postcards, 2,000 copies of each, and handed them out at various train stations in Jakarta," Adibrata said.

Since Tuesday, the group has handed out the comic books to train passengers at Pasar Minggu Station, Cawang Station and Kebayoran Station.

"The illustrations are dramatized but the inspiration came from true stories of accidents on top of trains. It's satire. People can look at the pictures and laugh, but at the same time it's disturbing," Eko said.

One comic strip tells the story of a man electrocuted by the electricity lines above the train carriages. A postcard depicts an overcrowded train carriage with dozens of people sitting on top of a caved-in roof.

Eko said that the illustrations were inspired by real life incidents. In 2006, the rooftop of a train, heading from Rangkasbitung, Banten, to Jakarta Kota Station, collapsed, killing 46 people.

Two of SERRUM's members, Ary and Adibrata, were former train-roof riders. Ary tried the dangerous practice when he was in junior high school, while Adibrata did it in senior high school.

"It's more comfortable, compared to the packed carriages, because of the seating space and the wind. But it's stupid," Adibrata said.

"We used to hear about accidents happening - people falling or being electrocuted," Ary said.

According to Ahmad Sujadi, a spokesman for state rail company PT Kereta Api, 26 people were killed riding train roofs in greater Jakarta in 2007.



Comics at station: Train passengers inspect comic posters at Kota Station in West Jakarta. The exhibition is part of the Jakarta Biennale 2009 art festival.

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