

INDIE WHAT? INDIE WHO?

What is Indieguerillas? Who is Indieguerillas? These are legitimate questions that the Indonesian art public might have, considering that Indieguerillas is a relatively-new player in the Indonesian world of contemporary art. Through this exhibition, Garis artSpace along with Indieguerillas invite the Indonesian art audience to get to know Indieguerillas better.

WHO IS INDIEGUERILLAS?

Indieguerillas is a pair of husband and wife, Dyatmiko Lancur Bawono (Miko) and Santi Ariestyowanti (Santi), who collaborate in creating their works of art. To know Indieguerillas better, let us look back on their artistic journey so far.

The collaboration between Miko and Santi began in 1999, when they received an order to create the cover design for Sheila on Seven's album titled "Kisah Klasik untuk Masa Depan" (A Classic Tale for the Future). Since then, they have been working together as graphic designers under the name of Indieguerillas. One of their principles is that of "work and play". 'Work' signifies the time they work commercially, doing orders from their clients, while 'play' signifies the time when they create works purely for their artistic pleasure. The graphic designer and interior designer eventually got married in 2002 and keep on working under the name of Indieguerillas.

In 2002, Cemeti Art house invited them to take part in a joint exhibition with a French graphic designer. The exhibition marked their entrance into the Indonesian art world. From that moment on, they have been taking parts in many art events, including the CP Biennale in 2005. 2007 was an important year in their artistic career, as they participated in an exhibition titled "ArtVertising" at the Indonesian National Gallery. Their involvement in the exhibition gave them a new perspective regarding their artistic career. Since that exhibition, they decided to reduce the 'work' element that had been dominant in their collaboration, and one which supported their life, and make the 'play' element as the dominant aspect. We can say that it was the day when they affirmed their position as an artist couple.

Artists or designers?

Their experience as designers clearly affects their artwork as well as their creative process. One striking aspect of their artwork is their use of materials and techniques. They believe that art is not only about canvases, paints, copper, wood, or any other conventional materials. They are keenly aware that their intimate knowledge of the computer technology and digital prints that they have applied in their design works gives them new opportunities in their artistic explorations. They do not, however, entirely leave the conventional art practices of using paints and canvases. Rather, it is the marriage between the computer technology and the

conventional ways that is able to produce fresh and intriguing artwork, which is one characteristic feature of Indieguerillas' artworks.

Unlike many other artists who think and work in solitary confinement, Indieguerillas begin their creative process with a brainstorming session between Miko and Santi. Such collaborative acts continue as they create their works. They often involve a third party during the process, for example in woodworking, metal, resin, acrylic, or digital printing studios. They invite the third party as a partner in their creative process.

Unlike many other artists who view their works as highly-individualized works, Indieguerillas believe that the individualized part of a work is its idea, not its process. Even here the 'individual' is actually the pair of Santi-and-Miko, instead of only Santi or only Miko.

WHAT IS INDIEGUERILLAS?

Like their creative process, the content of each of their works is essentially a marriage between the traditional values and the latest modern values. This combination is not without its reason and goal. Essentially, the values in Indieguerillas' works are metaphors for their existence as a Javanese pair who lives in today's world of youth that is full of the globalized Western influences.

The wayang, brands, and deformation and juxtaposition are important elements that form Indieguerillas' visual language about their self identity as contemporary Javanese people who live between traditions and modernity.

The wayang in the works of Indieguerillas In their works, Indieguerillas often employ wayang figures and/or characters from folk stories. These figures and characters symbolize their existence as Javanese people with strong Javanese values. The wayang figures they often use in their works are the punakawans or the royal attendants, because these characters are typically Indonesian. The punakawan is not recognized in the wayang stories in India or in other countries. The second reason is because punakawans symbolize the wise commoners. As far as I know, Santi and Miko indeed consider themselves as commoners instead of as well-known artists.

Deformation and juxtaposition in the works of Indieguerillas.

The use of wayang in Indieguerillas' works is closely related to the prevailing artistic trend among the contemporary youth. The hip-hop music, as well as rock music, street art, urban fashion, and skate boards form subcultures that influence the emergence of Low-Brow Art, which eventually grow and become a trend among the American and European youth. This influence spreads all over the globe, including to Yogyakarta, Indieguerillas' place of residence. This is evident in the works by Indieguerillas, especially in the ways they deform shapes and juxtapose objects. The

wayang characters in Indieguerillas' works do not appear in their original forms, and sometimes it is even difficult for us to recognize them. Still, the essence of each wayang character remains strong. In the work titled Kanoman Over Drive, for example, we can see ten wayang figures characteristic of Indieguerillas.

Deformations and juxtapositions are important elements in Indieguerillas' works. They become the tools to obscure their identity, while simultaneously searching for it. This is just like many Indonesians who have blurred their identities as Indonesians, but unconsciously found new identities as contemporary Indonesians. When Indieguerillas deform their wayang figures so much that they no longer resemble their original forms and tend to appear like cartoon characters, Indieguerillas are actually establishing new forms that will serve as their distinct identity.

The juxtaposition, like the deformation, is an effort to obscure identity and simultaneously to establish relationships between the present days and objects that seem passé or out of date and no longer relevant to the contemporary public. With the juxtaposition, these objects become relevant and communicative again. An example is the work titled I Got Ten Celebrity's Heads and Hefner Ain't One. The fundamental idea for the work is the evil giant Dasamuka or "Ten Faces" of the Ramayana wayang story. In the work, Indieguerillas juxtapose Dasamuka's body with a body of a contemporary youth in t-shirt, and the ten faces of Dasamuka are replaced with faces of contemporary figures or icons, some of them have negative reputations such as Mao, Lenin, and Mister Smile in the style of Hitler; and some others, like Tintin, Astro Boy, Colonel Sanders, Captain America, Monalisa, and Hulk are faces that represent goodness.

One of the issues that Indieguerillas wish to present through the work is that in the all-grey situation of the Javanese culture, which does not see things in black and white, someone can be considered good or evil depending on the perspective that we use.

Brands in the works of Indieguerillas.

The use of brands, or symbols that represent certain brands, is another feature of Indieguerillas' works. A brand actually functions to present the identity of a product, but today brand has come to represent the identity of the user instead. Each of us, including Indieguerillas, often seeks to establish an identity by using certain brands that can make us feel more confident. Marlboro creates an impression of being macho like an American cowboy; Adidas shoes make us become a part of the global, up-to-date youth; Blackberry makes us feel important and up to date; etc.

The concept behind brands is initially a modern marketing concept imported from the West to help us market our products. Without our realizing it, they have now represented the dominance of the Western culture in Indonesia. Gradually we, including Indieguerillas, replace our cultural identities with the global brands; for

example the traditional kebaya is replaced by Levi's; keroncong music with Black Eye Peas; batik with Esprit; etc. This is all in our effort to become global citizens. Ironically, however, in our minds and emotions, we are still Indonesians. When they meet their parents, Santi and Miko still kiss their parents' hands; and everyday they still speak Javanese mixed with Indonesian. Since childhood, they have been familiar with Javanese folk stories, and they still keep a traditional keris blade. The values of tradition run in their veins and have become an inseparable part of their existence as Javanese.

In their works, Indieguerillas use brands not only to replace the traditional attributes to represent the marginalization of traditions due to the Western influences, but also to convey their opinion that such brands have precisely given rise to new forms of identity and traditions: the tradition of the contemporary Indonesian urbanites, just like us and Indieguerillas themselves.

As artist couple that is still relatively new to the Indonesian art world, Indieguerillas can be considered successful, both creatively and financially. A proof of this is the fact that they have often been invited to a variety of important exhibitions, not only in Indonesia but also abroad; for example the Animamix Biennial: Visual Attract & Attack, Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, Taiwan, 2009; Tear Off DIY: Miami International University of Art and Design, Miami FL, 2007; CP Biennale: Urban Culture, Museum Bank Indonesia, Jakarta, 2005. In the auction houses and art fairs, collectors eye their works.

As dr. Oei Hong Djien has said in the catalogue for this exhibition, one of the factors that make a collector wish to buy an artwork is the unique quality of the work. Many collectors and curators who have worked with Indieguerillas comment that what makes them interested in Indieguerillas is precisely their unique quality. They are unique in many aspects: in terms of their media as well as in terms of the content of the artwork.

I think, it is Indieguerillas' success in blending tradition and modernity in a distinct visual language that makes them so UNIQUE.

- Hermanto Soerjanto -