

# Old times revisited in Yogya's graphic exhibition

YOGYAKARTA (JP) For many, digging up old memories is an absorbingly fascinating activity which brings back to the present all sorts of memories, be they pleasing or not.

Only a few people realize that daily items, generally considered trivial, may record life's various events. A product's trademark label, for example, can tell a lot about how a group of people lived when the trademark represented a particular industry.

In the context of collecting the "remnants" of old memories from seemingly trivial items, the unique Exhibition of a Hand Label, First Generation, is now under way at Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta, Jl. Surono No. 2, Yogyakarta. The exhibition, which began on Sept. 18 and runs to Sept. 29, displays hundreds of trademark labels from various products generally considered to be daily necessities, as well as other items, such as advertisements dating back to before 1950.

When opening the exhibition, Sindhanata, an observer of Javanese culture, said most of these items were the property of Bentara Budaya. Most of the exhibited advertisements are

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handmade in the sense that they were made without paper plate or zinc plate techniques, let alone offset printing.

The oldest item exhibited, dating back to 1838, is *The Queen the Lady* newspaper, which was published in London. The paper carried an advertisement for Pears soap. Made with a handpress, the newspaper shows the technology of yesterday could produce results equal to today's computer-aided print technology.

Also on exhibit is the March 27, 1933 edition of the Indonesian newspaper *Sedia-Tomo* and some other print media publications from the 1930s, including an edition of *Singo* magazine.

Of all the product exhibited, the most interesting is a label from a cigarette called *Roko Prijaji*. The label depicts a Javanese nobleman in his regal dress, complete with a crown, holding a lit cigarette. The name of the cigarette is also inscribed on the label in large letters. The exhibition also displays the for-



own labels for Sfelendo Cigarettes and Mascot cigarettes in striking colors.

Also featured in the exhibition are advertisements for Biskuit Verkade (1920), Lampoe Philips, Band Dunlop, Colgates' tandpasta, Pentjak cigarettes, Orong-orong, Uget-ugot and some other products.

Most of these advertisements are in Javanese and in some cases contain Dutch words, as in this advertisement for shoes: *Koenjoengalah Toko dan Schoenmakerij* ... (Visit ... Shoe Shops and Shoemakers). Javanese words are used in an advertisement for Colgate toothpaste.

The words and expressions used in these advertisements may sound simple or naive to our modern ears. Observe this advertisement for M Djojotarono shoemaker: *Pekerjaan tjepat dan rapi. Diharap toean? djadi lengganan* (Quick and neat work. Hope you will be our patron).

A number of the advertisements were produced on enamel and metal sheets. Some of the advertisements made on enamel sheets are for Roko Prijaji cigarettes, Simplex bicycles

and Sunlight dish soap. Reportedly an advertisement made on enamel or metal required a flame of above 1,000 degrees Celsius. Although the technology used was simple, the color of the advertisements made on enamel sheets lasted an extraordinarily long time, as seen by the clarity of the letters and the brightness of the colors of these old advertisements.

One of the product labels made on a metal sheet was *Trip Tangan* (the Hand Label). Generally, advertisements made on metal sheets were hung on beams or the walls of shops.

Other old items displayed at the exhibition are telephones, teapots, seals, abacuses, ceramic tea sets, typewriters and sewing machines. According to Sindhunata, of all the items exhibited, advertisements on enamel sheets were the most difficult to find because they are rare and very expensive.

After the official opening, the exhibition was crowded with visitors who, oblivious to their surroundings, were absorbed in the displayed items. Some of them could not hide their surprise upon learning that some of the products

we still use today were available so long ago.

Some of the visitors looked amused by the words used in the advertisements, which sounded strange to their ears.

Meanwhile, some older visitors, taken away by fond memories, became involved in a discussion about their experiences with a cigarette which used to be a market leader in quality.

Repro by Tjahjono Eo

Advertisements for Colgate toothpaste (above) and Roko Prijaji cigarettes (left) from way back when.