

Artists tap the Olympic

spirit, with a twist



Courtesy Nadi Gallery

Kula Mboten Remen BLAS Olah Kanuragan (I Don't Like Doing Sports) by Ugo Untoro

As the Olympics returned to its native home this year, with the Cultural Olympics to accompany the Sports Games in Athens, a group of 28 Indonesian artists drew inspiration from the auspicious event.

Gathered together by Nadi Gallery at the initiative of Astari Rasjid, and curated by Enin Supriyanto, their works are currently exhibited at The Pakubuwono Residence in South Jakarta, with Greek ambassador Alexios Christopoulos and Jakarta Deputy Governor Fauzi Bowo officiating at the opening of the exhibition on Aug. 19.

There is no competition greater than the Olympic Games, said Pindar the Greek lyric poet in the 5th century BC. Of course, he was speaking about male athletes only, as the ancient Olympic games, performed in the nude and dedicated to Zeus, did not include women.

But this did not prevent women from having their own Olympics, dedicated to Hera the wife of Zeus. According to Pausanias, a native of Asia Minor who chronicled his extensive travels in Greece in the second century, the women's Olympics was organized and supervised by a committee of 16 women from the city of Elis every four years, when a new peplos was woven and presented to Hera inside her temple.

Over the ages, the Olympic games evolved from the original homage to the Greek gods into a sports celebration, including men and women athletes around the world — a benchmark of athletic excellence, but also an arena for peace and human values, or so it was suggested.

Yet, the noble values attached to the Olympics, humans are still stabbing at each other, as featured in Galam Zulkifli's *Siapa yang Membunuh*

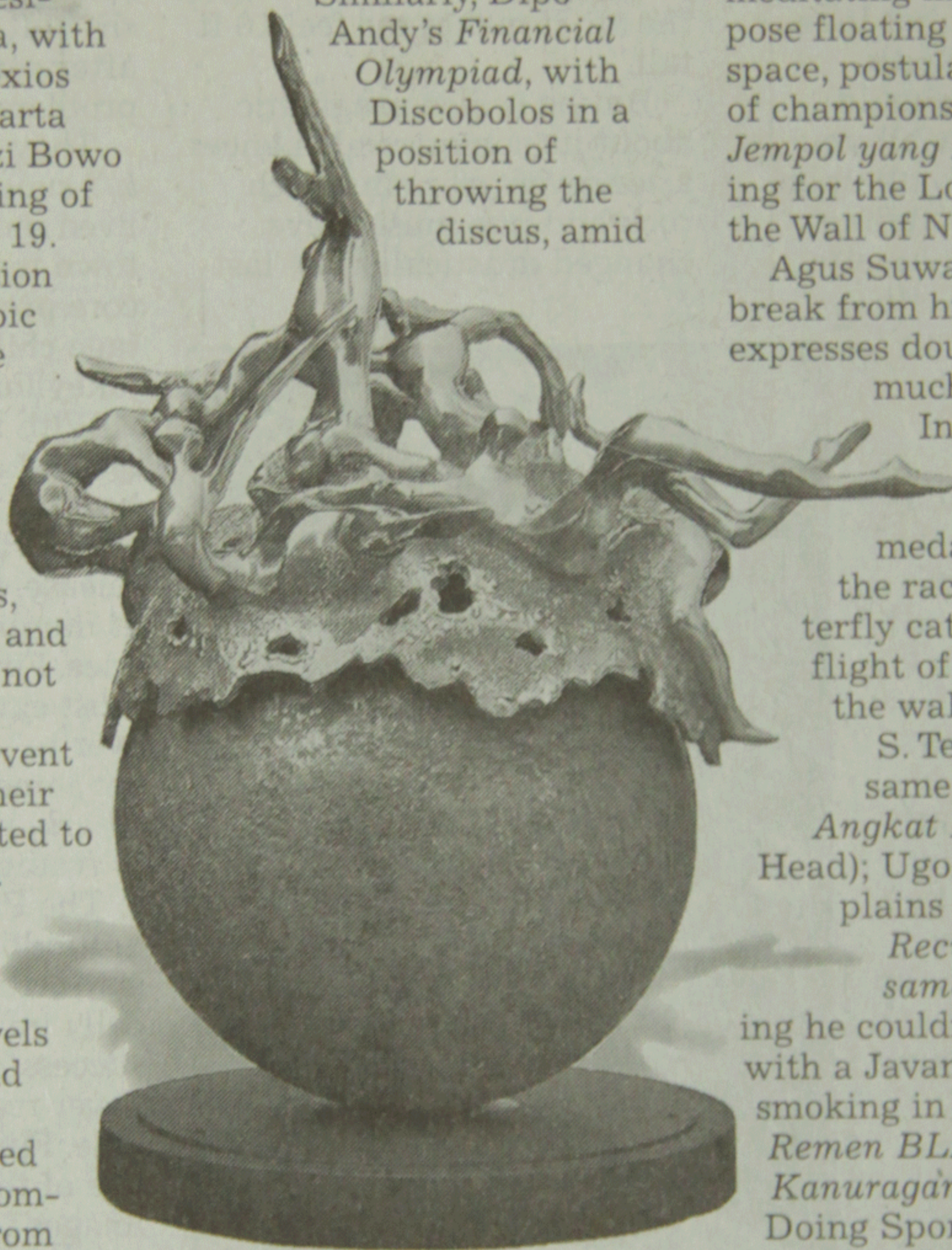
Sipembawa Obor (Who Killed the Torch Bearer?); commercial greed reigns supreme, says Yuli Prayitno in featuring titanium colored soccer boots resting on a

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number of human forefingers in his sculpture *Value of Economical System*, and wishing he was like the winged messenger of the gods in *Kalau Saya seperti Hermes* (If I Were Like Hermes).

Similarly, Dipo Andy's *Financial Olympiad*, with Discobolos in a position of throwing the discus, amid

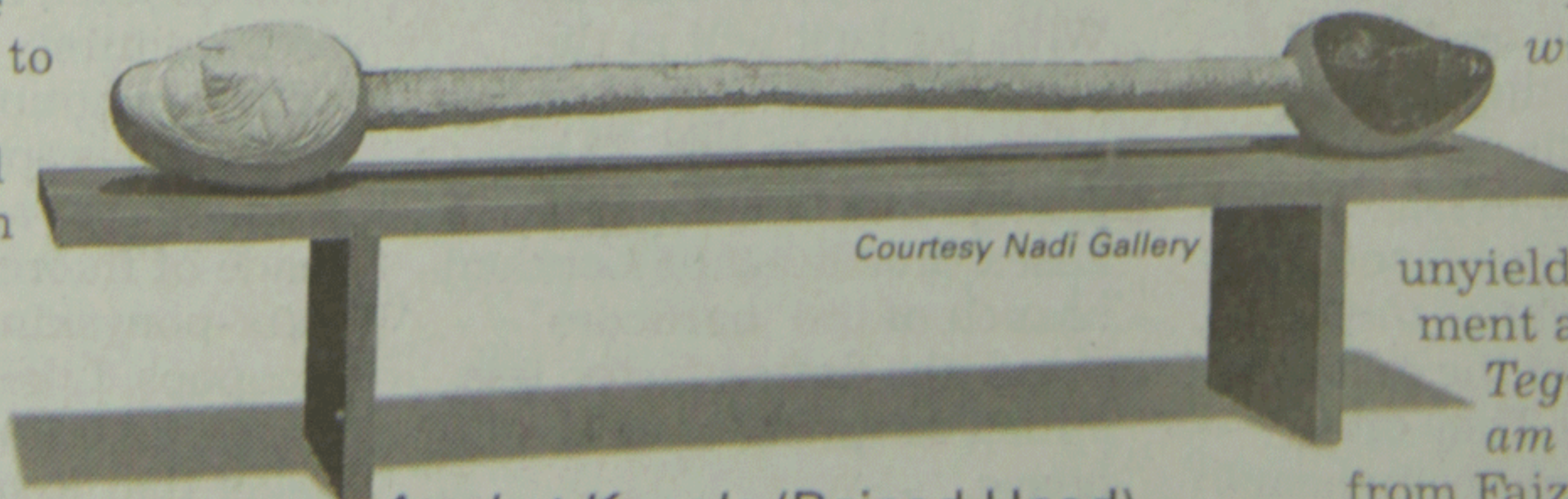


Courtesy Nadi Gallery

Perjuangan Sang Juara (The Fight of the Champion) by Yani Mariani Sastranegara

stock exchange statistics, thinks it's all about the money.

A personal and national perspective is seen in Pintor Sirait's finely finished sculpture *Burning Sensation*, with a phallic-shaped rocket with sexy images on it to show



Courtesy Nadi Gallery

Angkat Kepala (Raised Head) by S. Teddy D.

how far behind we are compared to other countries. The phallic symbol and the five circles symbol of Olympics

seem to speak of power in gender relations and in international relations.

Heri Dono's sociopolitical comment commentary is found in his almost outmoded *wayang* (shadow puppet) mode, featuring the halfgod Semar in a laughable race against a snail in *Semar versus Keong*, while Entang Wiharso overcomes his desperation not with his usual eerie bulging eyes, but by meditating in an exalted pose floating in a closed space, postulating on the loss of championship in *Mencari Jempol yang Hilang* (Searching for the Lost Thumb) from the Wall of Nation series.

Agus Suwage, in a rare break from his self-images, expresses doubts on the much vaunted

Indonesian shuttlers' ability to win a gold medal, transforming the racket into a butterfly catcher below a flight of butterflies on the wall.

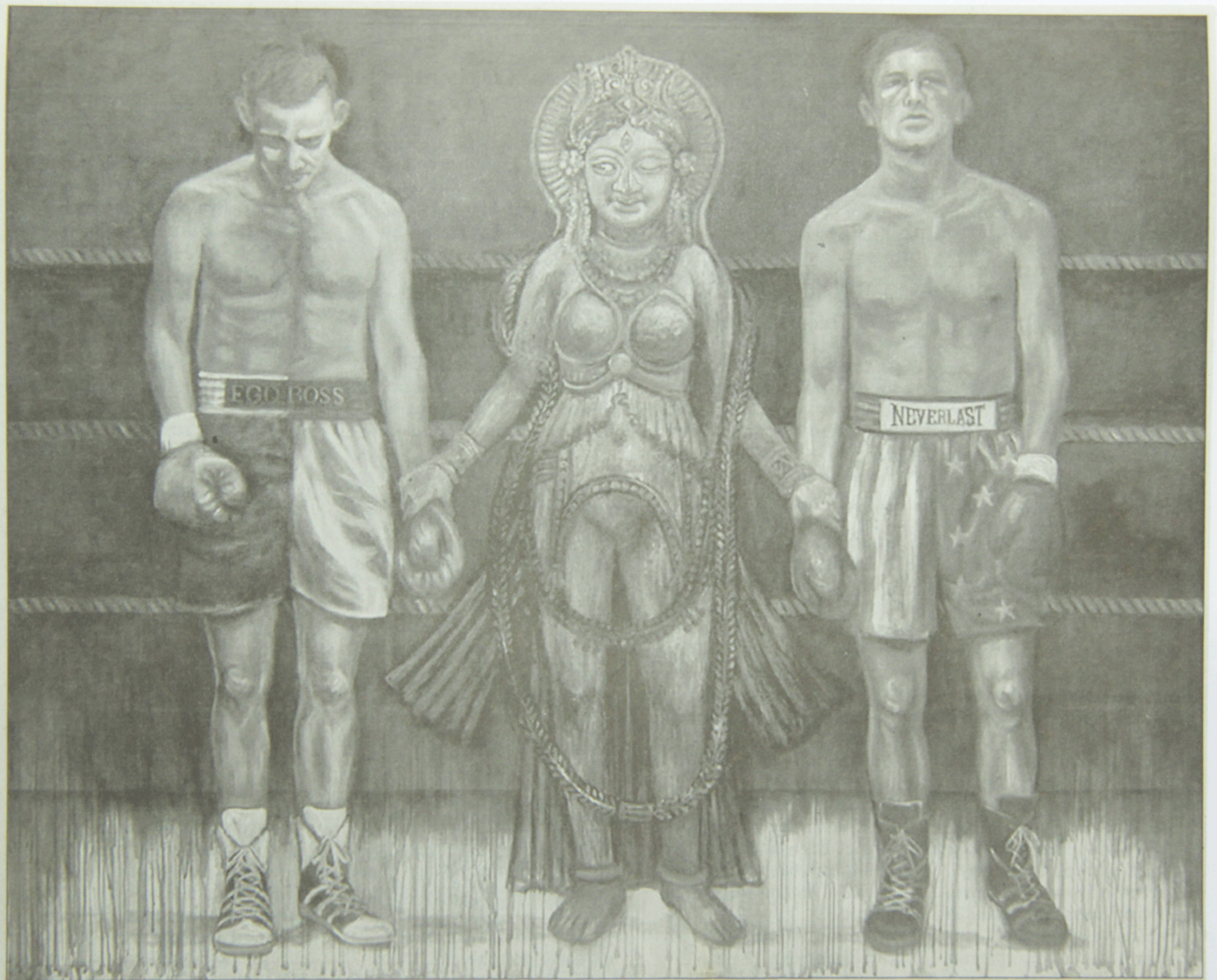
S. Teddy is of the same opinion in his *Angkat Kepala* (Raised Head); Ugo Untoro complains in *Perseus Recurrence of the same*, ultimately saying he couldn't care less, with a Javanese leisurely smoking in *Kula Mboten Remen BLAS Olah Kanuragan* (I Don't Like Doing Sports). It's just *Another Entertainment*, opines Agapetus Kristiandana.

Meanwhile, Budi Kustanto has things other than the Olympics to think of in declining land, decimated flora and fauna and repression of the small people, expressed with alluring freshness in images of himself flying a dragonfly in *Capung*, or standing against a giant grasshopper in *Praying Mantis*.

Yet *We must win* says Samuel Indratma, and it's an

unyielding sentiment also found in *Teguh Hati for I am the Greatest* from Faizal. A bird of a similar feather is Agapetus Kristiandana's arrogant Rooster in *Warrior*.

No local TV station is covering the games, while people



Courtesy Nadi Gallery

Waiting for Ratu Adil by Astari Rasjid

actually love to watch this kind of "civilized war" notes Didik Nurhadi in his painting of the same name, and *Cerita Tentang Kaum Penonton* (Story about the Audience).

Not to worry, for people can still dream, as Melodia realistically puts forward in *Mimpiku pada Olympiade* (My Dream of the Olympics), with a boy holding a football under his arm with David Beckham lurking on the side.

Well, one can dream on and hope for a miracle, or what the Javanese call Ratu Adil, the God/Goddess of Justice who is expected to bring justice, security and prosperity and save the nation from destruction. But Astari Rasjid points to the fallacy of such expectations, for neither the current leadership of the nation, nor the international bodies can be trusted.

That is what Astari seems to say in her *Waiting for Ratu Adil*, in which a malicious ancient Hindu goddess, supposedly a referee, who is holding the hands of two modern boxers just before announcing the winner, blinks to reveal some wicked intent. There are the fatigued figures of the boxers who wear shirts indicating their Indonesian and American nationalities, and the Indonesian's shirt that is branded Egoboss (a twist on Hugo Boss) and the American with Neverlast (for Everlast).

But all this doesn't mean the athletes don't struggle firmly to uphold their reputation and win a gold medal, as seen in Yani Mariani's lyrical sculptures made in pewter and titled *Perjuangan Sang Juara* (The Fight of the Champion) and *Buah Kemenangan* (Fruit of Winning), as well as in Gregorius Sidharta's wooden *Tonggak Perjalanan* (Pillar of A Journey) and bronze *Sang Juara* (the Champion).

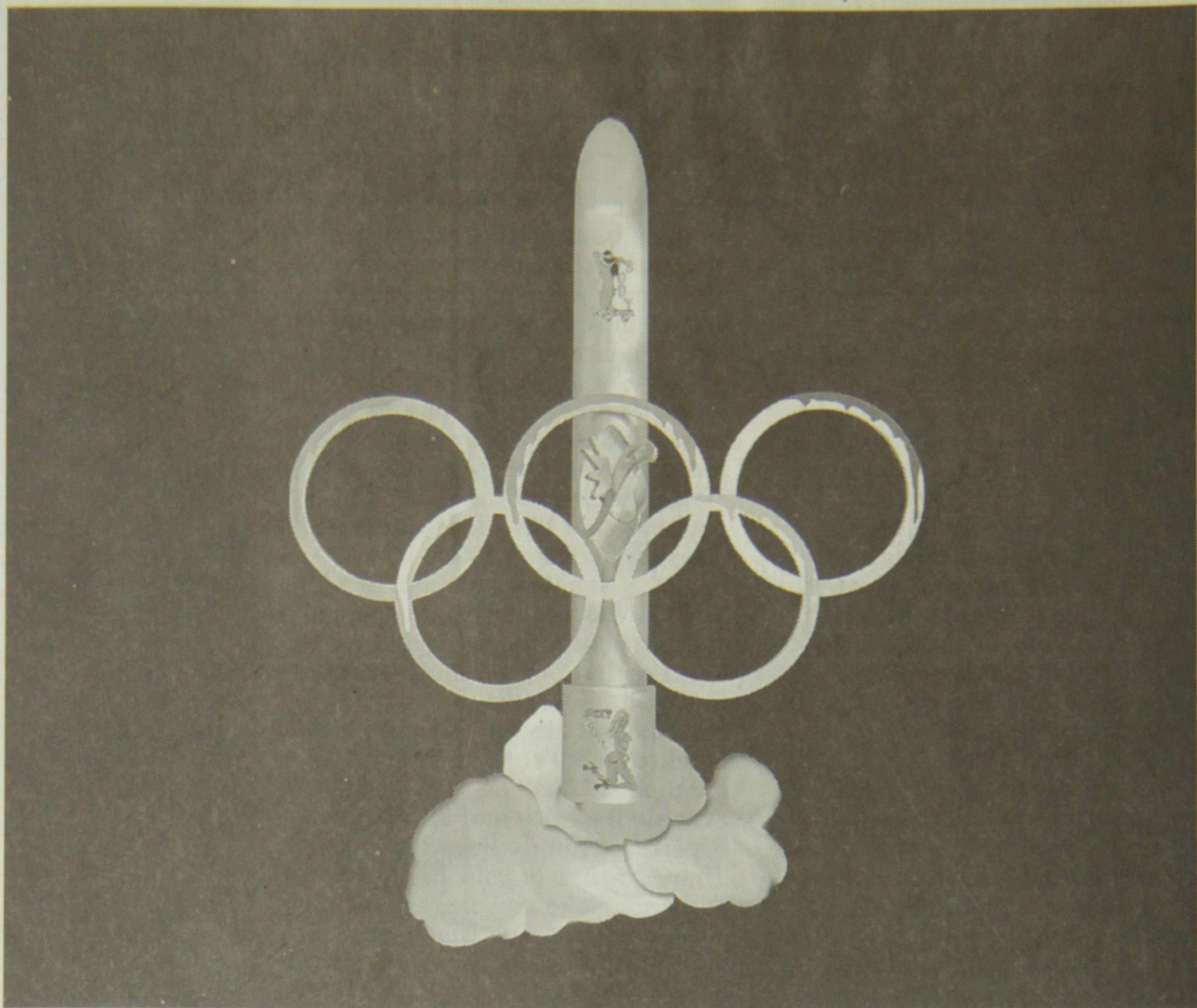
Life is all competition anyway,



Courtesy Nadi Gallery

Kalau Saya seperti Hermes (If I Were Like Hermes) by Yuli Prayitno

reveals Astari's *Sporting Girls*, a diptych of a woman in traditional outfit taking exactly the same pose as her sister in sports gear ready to throw the discus. *Winner takes it all* says Bunga Jeruk, with a contented winner



Courtesy Nadi Gallery

Burning Sensation by Pintor Sirait

amid a colorful garden, but in *Oops* (Yani Halim), why do the athletes on both sides of the champion pinch their noses as the number one raises his arms?

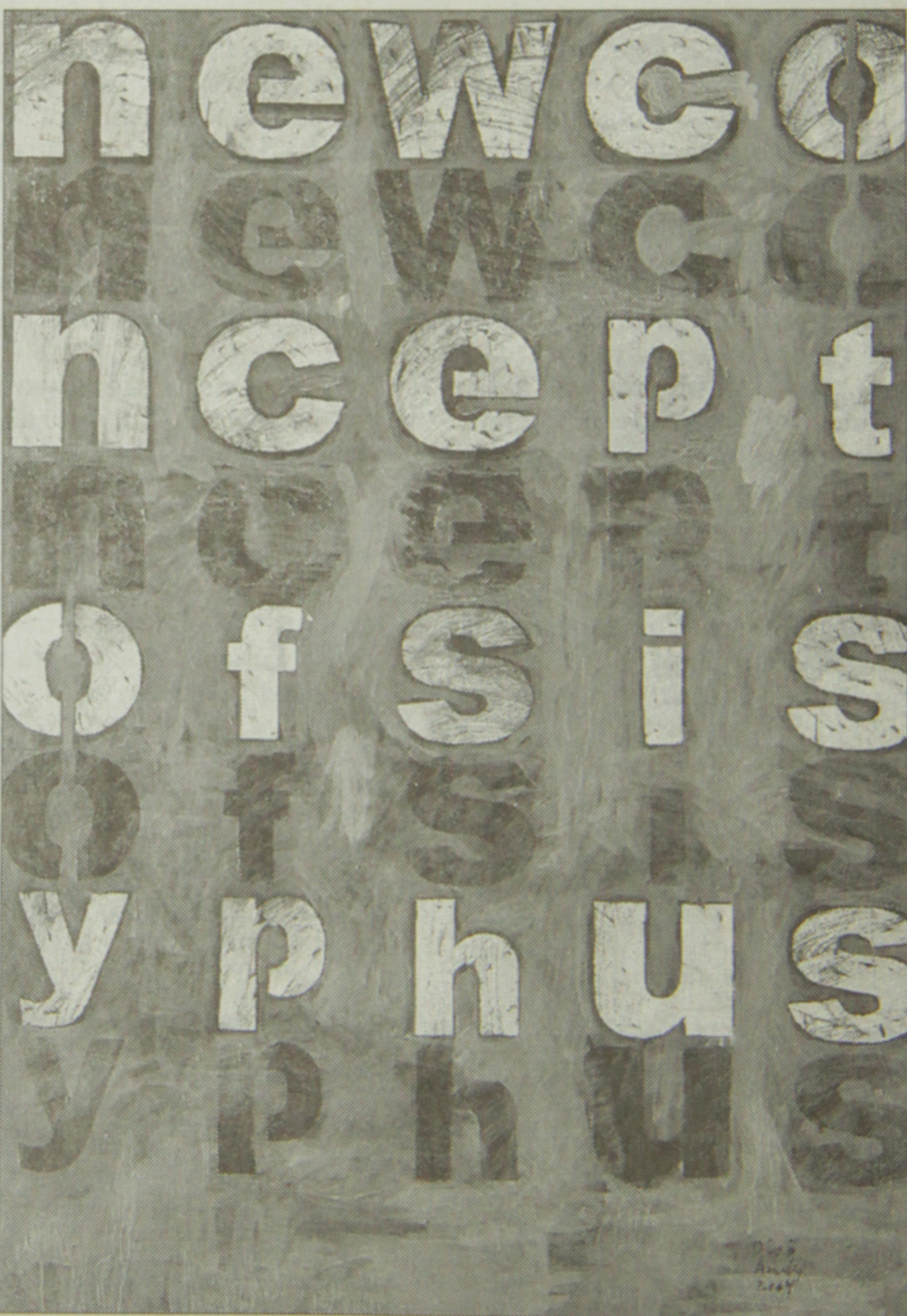
And why does Adi Kaneko's *Winner* look like multiple fools?

These come together with Anusapati's abstractions of *Speed* in bamboo and *Balance* in wood, Edo Pillu's *Kulit Dewi Olympia* (Olympic Goddess Skin), *Sang Penyair* (the Poet) and *Hegemony of Meaning*, Faizal's *Even the Angel is Coming Home*, Ronald Manulang's *Blind Archer with the S Eye*, Syahrizal Pahlevi's *Klub 5* and *Klub 6*, Tisna

Sandjaja's *Nyanyian Tubuh Buta* (the Singing of the Blind Body), Tjandra M.

Alim's photographic images of a rally. In all, the exhibition is a manifestation of Indonesian artists' basic concerns about the well-being of their country and the world.

Still, shuttler Taufik Hidayat proved wrong the overall pessimistic outlook, obtaining the desired gold medal, as did his fellow badminton players who obtained two bronzes and weightlifter Lisa Raema Rumbewas who secured a silver, even if only those with cable TV were watching at home. May their success help the spirit of the next Olympic exhibition.



Courtesy Nadi Gallery

Financial Olympiad by Dipo Andy

Olympics art exhibition

The Pakubuwono Residence, Jl. Pakubuwono VI, No. 68, Kebayoran Baru, South Jakarta. Open from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Until Sept. 2

For further information, call 021- 7259988, or visit www.pakubuwono6.com or www.nadigallery.com.