

### **Why are Indieguerillas' works so popular?**

The rarity and uniqueness of a work are two important factors that a collector considers before buying the work. If the artist is dead, it would be easy for us to assess these two factors. But how do we judge the rarity and uniqueness of a work by a living artist, especially if the artist is still young and active? That would certainly be more difficult and there is an element of speculation, because the artist is still working and if he or she is still young, the road ahead is still long and there will be plenty of others works to come. To make things more complicated, if an artist becomes important and the works are sought out, that same artist tends to become more productive. What is rare and unique today, might not be so in the future. Here the character of the artist is an important factor to consider.

We are here talking about painting, because paintings can be made quite quickly, so much so that we have the term '*jepret art*'—or, literally, 'flash art'. Numerous paintings of young artists today become cheaper as the boom in the contemporary art market subsides because of the global economic crisis, and the artists who have been highly productive are affected. Being productive does not necessarily means being creative, although a creative artist is usually also productive. If the artist is truly creative, however, the quality of the works will be maintained; but if the artist is merely productive, the quality often suffers. We should never try to restrict creativity. Many people say that to maintain good prices, the artist should not make too many works. The logic here is faulty, because by restricting the artist, his or her creativity might be hampered. We should, however, restrict productivity if the works do not to show any creativity.

How do we decrease productivity without hampering creativity? By exploring other media; perhaps going to two-dimensional works other than painting, or trying multi-dimensional works. The creativity is thus not hampered, but instead is spurred on, and at the same time there would be less time for the artist to paint as he or she is busy making other kinds of art. Consequently, there will be not too many of the artist's paintings on the market and the price stays high. Rudi Mantofani's and Handiwirman's works enjoy stable prices, because apart from painting, they also create other works that are as good as the paintings and sometimes are even better. Those works also enjoy high prices, certainly not less than those enjoyed by the paintings. Meanwhile, the paintings remain in high demands and sought by collectors because they are rare.

Like Rudi Mantofani and Handiwirman, Miko and Santi do not come from the painting department. They form a unique and rare phenomenon. Even the name is peculiar: Indieguerillas. In what language is that name? I don't know. What does it mean? I don't know that, either, and I've never asked them. It certainly is not a person's name, but a pseudonym, or perhaps a moniker created by the pair of husband and wife, Miko and Santi, to unite them both and make them one artist. One thing is clear: it is a unique and rare name.

A pair of husband and wife, both are artists, working in the same field, for example in art. We have often encountered such phenomenon. It is not surprising because they might have met when they were still in the university, and then they got married. In the course of their career, they rarely enjoy similar achievements. Perhaps the husband becomes more prominent, or it can very well be that the wife becomes more successful. There might be a kind of rivalry between the husband and the wife, and if the man loses, things might become complicated for the wife, and the threat of divorce might become real.

It is different with Miko and Santi: they are equal. How is this possible? Because they have truly become one, just as the Bible tells us, that husband and wife should become one flesh. They create each and every work together, and people cannot tell which one is Miko and which one is Santi. The works appear as a mutual work by an artist that goes by the name of Indieguerillas, instead of Miko and Santi. They complement and need each other, and thus the chance for separation decreases. This is a unique and rare phenomenon.

I don't know how to categorize their works, but that is not important. Their works can be considered as street art, but they are different from other street art works that we commonly see in Indonesia. Street art originates from the West and generally have Western features; often, the Indonesian street art cannot be

distinguished from Western comics. It is not like that for the works by Indieguerillas, because their works have ethnic elements from Indonesia and therefore have Eastern features that are distinctly Indonesian. We can perhaps say that they appear naïve, but these works are not like the other naïve works I've known so far. There is thus another unique characteristic.

For Indieguerillas, digital prints serve as their basis. I first saw their digital print work at the ArtVertising exhibition, where advertising might take the form of artwork. Garis Art held this exhibition at the National Gallery of Indonesia in 2007. The exhibition was very successful in drawing the attention of the public, and even of school children. At the time, there was not much interest in digital prints. Indieguerillas subsequently also made paintings that became widely sought because the demands far exceeded their capacity to create paintings. Miko and Santi, however, never increase their “rate of production” in terms of painting, because they are also involved in creating three-dimensional works that require more time. Also, Indieguerillas are more concerned about the quality of the work rather than about the allure of the market. That is also a rare quality these days.

It is surprising how their non-painting works have also been widely sought by collectors. If there are works by Indieguerillas in an exhibition, there will certainly be many interested people around the works: be it the collectors, traders, or auction houses. As I have mentioned before, rarity and uniqueness are two important aspects considered by any collector, and they constitute an added value. For collectors in the know, Indieguerillas' works are interesting. Usually, beginner collectors will prefer mainstream works; for more experienced collectors, however, going against the mainstream is an enchanting challenge. It is more interesting and satisfactory to collect works that are uncommon, peculiar, and rare.

I've once asked Indieguerillas to create a wedding cake for my second and youngest son. The wedding ceremony was packaged as a merry art party in the middle of 2008. Everything inside and outside the wedding venue is artwork, created by more than a hundred artists. I had an uncommon idea. In usual wedding ceremonies, we cut the cake; but this wedding cake must instead be united from two different cakes, following the bible's message that I have mentioned before. Indieguerillas worked on this idea and created an artwork in the form of a cake, using wayang figures in place of the Western dolls of the bride and groom. After the two wedding cakes were merged, many babies—in the form of little cakes—appeared and the guests who watched the ceremony rushed to take these little cakes. It was truly a unique and rare event.

In this exhibition, Indieguerillas do not present any paintings. Instead, they will exhibit three-dimensional object works. Although I've never seen the works before, considering their ability, I believe the works will be unique and interesting, good for collection, because it is indeed their forte to create uncommon works of art that go against the mainstream.

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