

Studio Solitude

# Forget Dichotomies

With Santi Ariestyowanti &amp; Dyatmiko Lancur Bawono — Nov 26, 2018



*indieguerillas, hypecyclus, exhibition view, Mizuma Gallery Singapore, courtesy of the artist and MIZUMA Gallery, 2017*



»When we are not categorized, we feel free to create works fluidly and not bound to any convention.« The Indonesian artist duo indieguerillas, consisting of Santi Ariestyowanti and Dyatmiko Lancur Bawono, were educated as designers but worked as full-time artists for the past 20 years, developing formats ranging from installations to fashion shows often strongly influenced by popular culture and folkloric elements.

»With our way of working, we hope that we can continuously trigger new thoughts and new explorations.«

**Schlosspost:** You were both educated as designers, in communication and interior design, but decided in 1999 to found indieguerillas, a graphic design studio that led you to become full-time artists. What was the motivation to become full-time guerilla artists instead of working as a designer?

**Santi Ariestyowanti/Dyatmiko Lancur Bawono:** As (graphic) designers, we are expected to work perfectly. When we create designs for printed materials, any mistake certainly comes with a cost, and it is often very expensive. As artists, we learn to approach mistakes as something enjoyable, even to use it as an alternative outcome when finishing artworks, or as a starting point for new ideas. Despite all that, our experience as designers helps us very much when we prepare an artwork. Considering the fact that we work as a duo, our habit of brainstorming as designers became a positive influence to how we exchange and combine ideas for our works now.



Santi Ariestyowanti, studio solitude, 2018



Dyatmiko Lancur Bawono, studio solitude, 2018

**Schlosspost:** Your work reaches from exhibitions to fashion performances to artistic window designs commissioned by big companies like Hermès. In your work, do you differentiate between art and design?

**SA/DLB:** We don't really see the dichotomy of art and design as a problem, because after all they came from different starting points. Instead, we like to seek similarities. When we are not categorized, we feel free to create works fluidly and not bound by convention. Sometimes we even question the conventions, whether it's in the art or design context. With our way of working, we hope that we can continuously trigger new thoughts and new explorations.



indieguerillas, HERMES window design, Liat Towers Singapore, Courtesy of HERMES, 2018



indieguerilla, HERMES window design, Liat Towers Singapore, Courtesy of HERMES, 2018



indieguerilla, HERMES window design, Liat Towers Singapore, Courtesy of HERMES, 2018

**Schlosspost:** Your work is influenced by traditional folkloric motifs as well as by pop culture. What is your interest in connecting these visual languages?

**SA/DLB:** Although it seems we are sampling from traditional art forms, they are actually still considered popular culture among their audience. For example, the Panakawan characters that we often use and refer to in our works are characters unique to the Javanese Wayang Kulit (shadow puppets) and the Sundanese Wayang Golek (rod puppets) – the two major ethnic groups in Java. In a wayang kulit performance, Panakawan has its own segment, played after midnight. Panakawan is a group of jesters whose nature is to attract the attention of the viewers through various jokes relevant to the context of the show as well as to the current situations and social issues. We combine these social issues with popular and contemporary culture.



studio solitude, 2018



»For hundreds and even thousands of years, our country has been a melting pot of many major influences, and there are some who think that our people are like a big sponge that absorbs everything. But this is exactly what shaped the Indonesian culture in the past, in the present, and perhaps also in the future.«



Dyatmiko Lancur Bawono at work



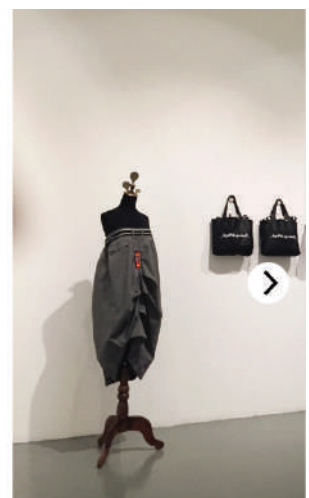
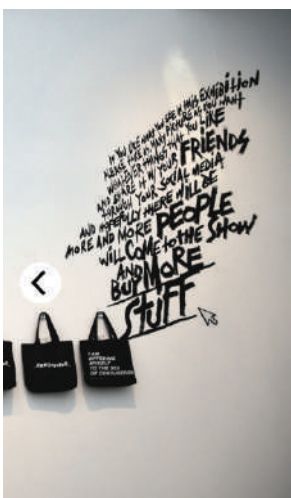
Studio Solitude, 2018



Pages from a riso-zine published during their residency



Printing workshop at Künstlerhaus Stuttgart



indieguerillas, hypecyclus, exhibition view, Mizuma Gallery Singapore, courtesy of the artist and MIZUMA Gallery 2017

**Schlosspost:** A connection I see between many of your projects is that they are often conceived as interactive works. For example, you did an exhibition for children in the National Gallery of Australia, which reminds me of a kind of artistic playground. Another work, *Datang Untuk Kembali*, addresses consumerism through a fashion collection that can actually be worn by people. What role does the spectator/user play for your work?

**SA/DLB:** Experience is something that the public derives from an encounter with an artwork. We believe that an immersive experience that involves various senses is more interesting to the public audience. The experience is enriched when the audience gets the chance to interact with the artwork. In art, it is not always necessary to keep a distance, like when we enter a museum. Although we cannot deny that there are some art forms that for some reasons require the distance. For us creating a work that is interactive, intimate, and even intentionally creating distance is a part of how we learn from nature. We bring ourselves close to nature, be it forests, the ocean, or any other ecological system. Everything and every creature living in the universe is connected with nature, and we consider nature art; art in which we live. In fact, nature allows itself to be appreciated in many different ways.



DATANG UNTUK KEMBALI is a collaboration between artist duo indieguerillas, fashion designer Lulu Lutfilabibi and music director AniWulu (WVLV) commissioned by The NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore.

**Schlosspost:** You describe your art-making process as an auto-critical ritual and a method of self-reflection, especially from the perspective of Javanese people, who live in a wave of global consumerism demanding everything is instantaneous. In a globalized world, do you think this auto-criticism can be addressed more at a whole global generation rather than at people from a specific national background?

**SA/DLB:** We are not in a position to judge others whose context and historical background we are not familiar with. What we know for sure is that we are in the middle of an ongoing, neverending learning process about ourselves. We understand so far that the tradition and culture of a community is closely tied to the environment in which its members live. They form a unity that has been tried and tested through a long time span.



»History is the light that prevents us from falling into the same hole as we walk forward.«

For example, in Java where we live, there is a specific region prone to earthquakes. The architecture of Java's traditional houses, as taught by Javanese ancestors, contains information about the usage of light materials, loosely-tied joints, and a foundation that is not fixed underground, so when the earthquake occurs, the structure is relatively flexible and can move with the tremors. This value is now almost extinct, taken over by new values that came in the name of modernity, promising efficiency. So, most houses in Java now are built with rigid and heavy structures, with foundations planted deep into the ground to save on long-term maintenance – one can only imagine the damage that will occur whenever an earthquake strikes. Of course, this is just one real example. There are still many other examples we can think of.



indieguerillas, NGA Play, National Gallery of Australia, 2017



indieguerillas, NGA Play, National Gallery of Australia, 2017

This was the main concern when we decided to relearn and excavate forgotten information, to seek clarity in our fading history. On the other hand, we also understand that values always change as we move forward. Seeking the balance of the old and the new is exactly the starting point of our creation process. How we can build awareness of the old values that are still relevant, while not closing our eyes toward the ever-changing spirit of time. History is the light that prevents us from falling into the same hole as we walk forward. Perhaps that last sentence can be something we can think about, regardless of our nationalities and backgrounds.

**Indieguerillas, Yogyakarta/Indonesia — Design, Solitude Fellow 2015-2017**

Indieguerillas is a collaborative artist duo between artist/designer Santi Ariestyowanti (b. 1977, Semarang) and Dyatmiko Lancur Bawono (b. 1975, Kudus). Design plays a very important role for them to explore unconventional media and techniques as part of their artistic process. Their working process is an auto-criticism ritual and a method of self-reflection. indieguerillas' philosophy of »constantly in guerrilla to find new possibilities« and their unique intertwine between traditional values and contemporary culture has led them to numerous exhibitions around the globe.

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