

Homo Habilis': JIMB #2 - An Art Pilgrimage

Words: Richard Horstman

One of the highlights of Jogja Art Weeks, a month long plethora of events held during June in Yogyakarta was the 2nd Jogja International Miniprint Biennale (JIMB#2). Emphasizing the exceptional skill of participating artists working in an array of print making mediums, the biennale was on display 24 May – 10 June at Sangkring Art Project.

In an era where new media and media exploration are often praised as the demigods of 'art now', conventional art forms such as printmaking are often overshadowed. The travelling exhibition, held also at Bentara Budaya Solo 1-7 September, recently ran from 20-28 October at Galeri Soemardja, Bandung.

"Art can be now made with the help of artisans, machines, or other objects and intermediaries. In the current art environment the artist's hands are no longer considered significant in carrying on the struggles of the soul," said artist, gallerist and JIMB#2 Jury Chairman Agung Kurniawan.

"To return to the use of skilled hands is a kind of pilgrimage, and perhaps also an important turning point."

The travelling exhibition featured one hundred and twenty-one mini prints by 110 finalists included 5 winners and 11 works from 5 guest artists from twenty-eight countries. The biannual event, themed 'Homo Habilis – Handy Man' serves as both a mini print exhibition and competition for Indonesian and international artists.

The works range within the four conventional printmaking techniques, relief printing (woodcut, linocut, rubber cut, collagraphy), intaglio (etching, drypoint, photo etching, aquatint, mezzotint), planograph (lithography), and serigraphy (silk screen and stencil). The maximum size of the works, printed on paper, are 20 x 20cm unframed, and 28 x 28cm framed.

"The mini print Biennale was planned from two perspectives, the desire to offer a unique graphic arts forum, and to follow the dynamic in the current constellation of visual art," said JIMB#2 Director Syahrizal Pahlevi.

"The Jury agreed on the theme "Homo Habilis" - dubbed the 'handy man' - being the first documented pre-historic human to use stone tools, to accompany our question, "How far does contemporary art and contemporary life underappreciate 'the strength and miracle of the hand'?" Pahlevi said.

Taking into account some of the latest issues in the world of printmaking, JIMB#2 invited five guest artists, two Indonesian and three international artists, including one of the winners from the first JIMB in 2014, Lidija Antanasijevic (Serbia, UK) to participate. The artists were chosen because of their international reputations, Art Werger (USA), important contributions as printmakers, Setiawan Sabana (Indonesia), the introduction of popular technical innovations-Kitchen Litho, Emilie Aizier (France), and widely acknowledged dedication to printmaking, Yamyuli Dwi Imam (Indonesia).

JIMB#2 participant Muhlis Lugin is a Yogyakarta based artist who since 2013 has been forging international markets with his relief print wood cut works, being represented by Vin Gallery, Ho Chi Ming City, Vietnam at international art fairs Art Taipei 2015, and Asia Contemporary Art Show 2015 in Hong Kong.

"To carve the wood block ready for printing 18.5 x 14.5 cm in size, requires one day," said the Indonesian Art Institute (ISI) Yogyakarta graduate, who was born in South Sulawesi in 1987. "The block is then covered with oil based ink to which paper is applied and next sandwiched between layers of felt, ready for the printing press. The process appears simplistic, yet to produce the quality works requires patience and skill."

"Mini prints demand to be observed up close," said Kurniawan. "Without regarding them at close range and looking carefully we miss the essence of these works; the line and textures that shape a narrative."

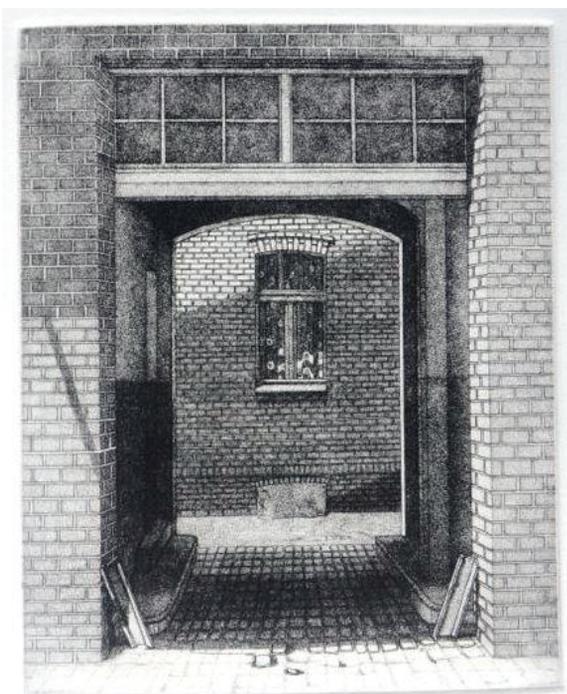
"In JIMB#2 the craftsmanship in printmaking is visually prominent," he said, commenting on the high standard of work in the exhibition. "Especially in the work of Italian artist Paolo Ciampini, that reveals microscopic lines of extraordinary detail."

Within Ciampini's winning etching work "The Woman" the artist utilizes the cross hatching technique in scoring the steel printing plate, emphasizing the naked woman's form. "Gate V" by Polish artist Weronika Siupka, another JIMB#2 winner, depicts a brick wall and paved entryway that too reveals remarkable dedication to achieving extraordinarily fine lines.

Bulgarian artist Dimo Kolibarov, however prefers the colorful etch aquatint technique. The strength of "Cycle: The Diary of a Child – the Golden Fish" is both in the narrative, along with the acute hand skills. In the work a child embraces a large golden fish while above floats various images and forms, akin to the child's imaginative ideas.

"Most of best works in this exhibition are by international artists, reflecting, unfortunately, the decline in printmaking in Indonesia today. JIMB#2 is a warning sign for the development of printmaking in Indonesia," Kurniawan adds. "We are fortunate to have such an exhibition where we can learn a great deal from the examples of other printmakers and apply this knowledge to our own future development of printmaking."

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Poland_Weronika Siupka (EXCELLENCE WORK)



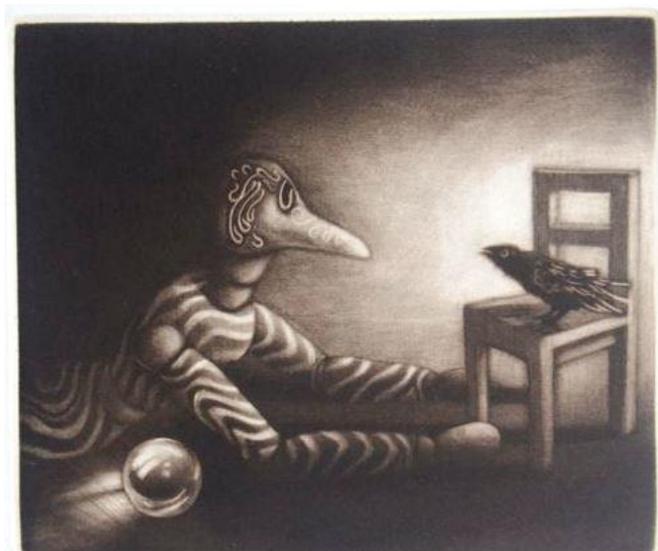
Italy_Paolo Ciampini (THREE BEST WORKS) (2)



Bulgaria_Dimo Kolibarov (THREE BEST WORKS) (2)



Italy_Silvana martignoni (EXCELLENCE WORK) (2)



Canada_Deborah Chapman (THREE BEST WORKS) (2)

