

Agan Harahap's "I Am the Greatest" series



"Rhein II" by Andreas Gursky

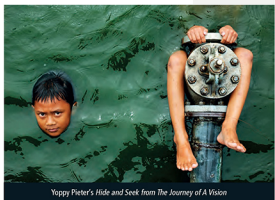
# THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY Paintbrush

DEBORAH ISKANDAR  
DISCUSSES ART PHOTOGRAPHY  
IN INDONESIA

Many people ask how to look at photography and is it collectible? Never before have photographs been more accessible and viewed. Photos are posted on social media, shared, transferred, snapped: we are experiencing "image overload." With high quality cameras, anyone can be a photographer. So, how should we make the distinction between art photography and hobbyist?

Most art photographers are artists by design, having attended art school, studied art history and making a conscious decision to be an artist. Contemporary art photography started in the early 20th century together with the rise of modern art. Photographers such as Man Ray, considered themselves first and foremost artists. He applied darkroom experimentation to his photographic images to interpret Dada and Surrealist art movements and capture images of the avant-garde. Man Ray manipulated his images in a physical way, to create his desired effect. His photograph "Noire et Blanche" (which before 1999 was one of the most expensive photographs ever sold in auction) shows a surrealist style model and an African mask, two subjects often depicted in the early twentieth century: the modern woman and the primitive.

Artists like Cindy Sherman continued the tradition in the 1970s when she eschewed painting for photography. She created the original "selfie" by turning the camera on herself and capturing her many personas that were staged as social commentary on feminism, sexism and the role of mass media and consumerism in our society. While Sherman's photographs from this period can sell in the millions of dollars, the top price for a contemporary photograph at auction is held by Andreas Gursky's "Rhein II" from 1999 which sold for \$4,200,000. Rhein II is a sublime landscape that has been digitally manipulated to remove all signs of life, to create his vision of the perfectly balanced landscape. Record prices such as these have established photography as an art form in a new investment class.



Yuppy Pieter's Hide and Seek from The Journey of A Vision

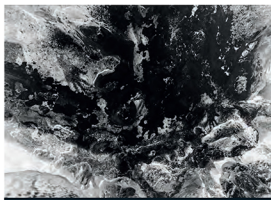
In Indonesia, we have a growing sector of photographic artists such as Kineza Riza, Agan Harahap and Angki Purbandono. What makes them different? Foremost is their artistic vision. The ability to create and manipulate a photo on the computer enables the photographer to "paint" their work.

Agan Harahap uses his imagination to juxtapose scenes which you think are real, but in closer inspection, are not. His flawlessly photoshopped photographs of Western celebrities in an Indonesian setting have become viral internet sensations. The combination of Indonesian tradition and Western pop culture poses the question on how our traditional roots and values can change with the influx of these foreign icons. It's also a play on the ability of social media to create false "news." Agan's latest series, "I Am the Greatest" goes a step further in distorting the viewer's grasp of time and reality. The image shows a "fight" between Mohammad Ali and Mike Tyson, two of the greatest boxers of all time. But then, in a moment of reflection you realise they were from two different eras; a scene that never took place, hence distorting our sense of reality.

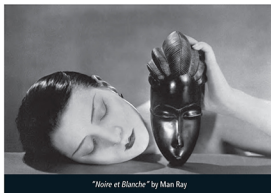
Kineza Riza's practice focuses on photographing nature's symbolism and iconology to create a narrative discourse of man and nature since the time of Genesis. At first glance, her photographs may appear deceptively simple, but the journey of planning and creating these shots became part of the social intercourse. Kineza collaborates with scientific institutions to go on artist-led expeditions to isolated communities and harsh environments to capture her shots. In her photograph "Sectional #2441 Pleistocene Hand Stencils, Leang Lompoa, Sulawesi" Kineza was able to document the earliest known "cave art" in the world, but present in a way that it appears like an abstract drawing that draws you in to discover the handprint of the 1st known artist.

Once an artist has gained critical recognition and public acceptance, we can look at their discourse and writings to appreciate their artwork. But what about young photographers trying to break into this stratified world? How do we look at their art?

The Art at WTC program provides a venue for emerging photographers to show their works in a public space. From November 2016-February 2017, Yuppy Pieter unveils "The Journey of a Vision." Originally trained as a photojournalist, Yuppy is transitioning to an art photographer after his inclusion in the Jakarta Biennale in 2015 and residency in Amsterdam in 2015. The theme of the exhibition is the "the highs and lows of Indonesia." Through Yuppy's eyes, we can see the changes and the diverse characteristics of his pilgrimage, from photo-realism, to grainy black and white images and finally his vision of new creations and



"Sectional #2441 Pleistocene Hand Stencils, Leang Lompoa, Sulawesi" by Kineza Riza



"Noire et Blanche" by Man Ray

realities. One of the highlights of the exhibition is "Hide and Seek," a photograph of children swimming in an abandoned water fountain in Bandung city. In this work, Yuppy tries to capture the importance of playing in a crowded metropolis as a vital part of childhood.

To cross the line from a hobbyist to the stratified world of fine art is a rite of passage. It takes the same factors for an artist of any medium: vision and ideas, talent, social discourse and most importantly, public and critical acceptance. For the art lover, we have to look at all levels of the field to appreciate what makes good art.

Yuppy Pieter's "The Journey of a Vision" will be exhibited at the World Trade Center II from November 2016-January 2017, in the retail area.

Deborah Iskandar is Principal of GA Advisory, which advises clients on buying and selling art, and building collections. An expert on Indonesian and international art, she has more than 20 years of experience in Southeast Asia, heading both Sotheby's and Christie's Indonesia during her career before establishing ISA Art Advisory in 2013. She is also the founder of Indonesian Luxury, the definitive online resource for Indonesians looking to acquire, build and style their luxury homes.

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