

Portikus is delighted to present Ade Darmawan's first solo exhibition in Germany. In keeping with tradition, we have invited an artist from the country featured at this year's Frankfurt Book Fair: Indonesia. An artist and curator, Darmawan, who lives and works in Jakarta, is the director of the Jakarta Biennale scheduled to open in November and a founding member of the artists' collective *ruangrupa*, whose organizing activities, event series, exhibitions, radio programming, and publishing arm make it an influential institution in Jakarta's young arts scene.

Darmawan's own art explores his country, its history and, most importantly, its people. He often turns the spotlight on what he calls "minor histories"—events that in themselves may not possess historic relevance but, in the aggregate, make up a community's past. His exhibition at Portikus is devoted to such subtle tendencies that first emerge along society's margins, slowly spread into the mainstream, and eventually change people's lives.

*Magic Centre* revolves around the Indonesian publishing company of the same name, which was mostly active in the 1960s. It serves the artist as a lens through which he examines the social and political changes that reshaped his country during the years *Magic Centre* was in business.

For several decades after 1945, Indonesia was wracked by political instability and tensions between communist and Islamist factions as well as nationalist propaganda. Under President Sukarno, who held office from 1945 until 1967, the country cautiously adopted socialist policies, but rather than aligning it with the Soviet Union or China, he sought to build an alliance with other countries of the Southern Hemisphere. In 1955, Sukarno hosted a conference in Bandung that led to the establishment of the Non-Aligned Movement, an initiative championed by Prime Minister Nehru of India and President Tito of Yugoslavia. The movement united countries that did not want to affiliate themselves with either the Western or the Eastern Bloc, and Sukarno saw them as viable models as he tried to steer an alternative course that blended communism and nationalism. The country's policies changed sharply after an attempted military coup in 1965. General Suharto seized the opportunity to crush the Communist Party of Indonesia and ordered massacres of the civilian population. The military itself perpetrated only some of the killings, but it supported and trained the many paramilitary units throughout the country; hundreds of thousands of civilians were murdered. After taking power and placing the president under house arrest, Suharto remade the country's political landscape. No less nationalistic than Sukarno, he urged an ideological shift toward an embrace of capitalism.

This is the moment Ade Darmawan homes in on in *Magic Centre*. The publishing company rose to prominence with books that promised to enhance the reader's intellectual abilities. Self-

improvement and the optimum use of one's skills, influence over others, the formation of character, the art of the business deal, and the life of success: these were the main themes of the publisher's catalogue, which, in later years, consisted mostly of translations of American titles. The books proffered "answers" to an audience hoping to lead a fulfilled life and master the challenges of modern capitalism. They reflect the production and dissemination of knowledge and throw the characteristic ideological fault lines of a society undergoing profound change into sharp relief. Was Magic Centre a disseminator of samizdat screeds or a purveyor of reputable literature?

As the influence of capitalism grows, markets change; product portfolios expand and create new demands. Publications issued by the state and Indonesian industry extolled the country's dynamic business environment and painted the picture of a rising economic power in order to appeal to foreign corporations and lure foreign capital into the young republic. The country's first Freeport McMoRan, which opened in Papua in 1967, boosted trade, and car manufacturers including Toyota shifted some of their production capacity to Indonesia. At the same time, business in imported products from Western industrial nations boomed: goblets and trophies, antlers and golf clubs, ceramic figurines and chandeliers—objects that may be read as the fetishistic possessions of Indonesians who surrounded themselves with Western products to signal their worldliness and success. Statusconscious social climbers decorated their homes with these emblems of modest wealth.

The vitrines themselves not only serve as display furniture, they also symbolize the country's industrial transformation. A staple of everyday life in the hundreds of shopping malls all over Indonesia today, the glass case exemplifies an early form of the presentation of merchandise, marking the emergence of the consumerist individual.

Arranged around the central chandelier, large banners with reproductions of various Magic Centre publications line the walls. Reduced to form and color—the artist has removed all writing—they become the flags of an imaginary nation. And that is perhaps the best description of the nexus the publishing company, as an organization dedicated to promoting education and capitalism in Indonesia and indirectly supporting Suharto's policies, occupied. Ade Darmawan's exhibition at Portikus is a collage of materials that articulates a critical as well as humorous take on a piece of Indonesian history: objects of fetishistic desire and consumerist pleasure as well as titles produced by Magic Centre and other books on economics form a visual survey of a country in transformation.

The exhibition is part of Indonesia LAB, an event series produced by the six partners of Frankfurt LAB: Ensemble Modern, Künstlerhaus Mousonturm, the Städelschule and Portikus, the Hochschule

für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt am Main and the Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company. In cooperation with the Goethe-Institute Indonesia, Indonesia LAB points out to one of the most dynamic contemporary art scenes in South-East-Asia. Supported by Kulturstiftung des Bundes and KfW Stiftung, the six partners initiate artistic laboratories in the domain of music, dance, performance, and visual art.

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