

FRAMER  
EDY WID

24 JAN —  
26 APR 2020



ON THE  
NATURE OF  
BOTANICAL  
GARDENS

*Contemporary Indonesian Perspectives*

EN

# ON THE NATURE OF BOTANICAL GARDENS

*Contemporary Indonesian Perspectives*

24 JAN—  
26 APR  
2020

## OPENING

23 January 2020  
18:00

## CURATOR

Sadiah Boonstra

## ARTISTS

Zico Albaiquni  
Arahmaiani  
Ade Darmawan  
Edwin  
Samuel Indratma  
Lifepatch  
Ipeh Nur  
Elia Nurvista  
Sinta Tantra

## INTRODUCTION

The exhibition *On the Nature of Botanical Gardens*, composed by curator and historian Sadiah Boonstra, explores the phenomenon of 'the botanical garden' as a place of collective memory and historiography. The exhibition's focus is on the role botanical gardens played in the colonial past and the ways in which the resulting power relationships live on in the present.

Although we know that humans have a big impact on nature, it is still primarily seen as beautiful, innocent, graceful, natural and passive. Placing nature in a historical perspective shows us how culturally determined some of our assumptions are. The representation, description and categorisation of plants takes place in a dynamic political context. Plants can be considered 'living archives' that offer us insights into historical blind spots, subversive stories and collective traumas. The trade and exchange of plants, the development of botanical descriptions and the formulation of classification systems, are strongly influenced by historical and political power structures. What has been preserved and what is not, and from which historical context? Why are certain plants and regions over-represented in our botanical collections, while others are invisible?

The history of botanical gardens, and with it our view of nature, has been shaped by our colonial expansion over sea. The search for profitable crops, the economy of extraction and exploitation, have left behind some very persistent structures. Two years ago, in the exhibition *Pressing Matters* (2018) that took place at Framer Framed and was organised by artist Kevin van Braak, 24 Indonesian artists already showed works with various historical, socio-political topics related to this theme, such as the felling of tropical rainforest to make space for mining, palm oil plantations and the extraction of other natural resources. Part of that exhibition was a wall painting by Ipeh Nur with the title *Bengah Mur* (2018), on which the Banda massacre led by VOC officer J.P. Coen (1587-1629) was depicted. The artwork confronted the public with the conflicting colonial past of the Netherlands in Indonesia. In the current exhibition, Nur shows a work drawn on rice bags that again criticises the violent colonial history in relation to the trade in nutmeg.

Another work that shows the entanglement between botanical and colonial history was shown in the exhibition *Re(as)sisting Narratives* (2016), curated by Chandra Frank, that was about the shared colonial history between South Africa and the Netherlands. In the video *The Remnant* (2017), Judith Westerveld showed the story of the 'Kirstenbosch hedge', a hedge of wild almond trees that Jan van Riebeeck planted on the border of the Dutch Cape as a defense against the indigenous Khoikhoi and

San tribes. The hedge can be considered as the first infrastructural formation of racial separation on the grounds of the Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden that lives on today. The hedge is seen as a symbol of apartheid; a natural separation created by white Europeans and the original inhabitants of South Africa.

The botanical garden Kebun Raya Bogor also played an important role in an earlier exhibition at Framer Framed. The solo exhibition *basic values* (2016) by herman de vries, travelled from the Erasmus Huis in Jakarta to Framer Framed. The artist used Indonesian objects and natural materials such as bamboo from the Bogor, a former Dutch colonial administrative centre renamed Buitenzorg from 1817 to 1945. The exhibition by herman de vries showed the cultural and biological richness and diversity of Indonesia from an aesthetic perspective. However, the artist had never visited the country itself. The concept of the exhibition was based on Dutch literature and photo albums about Indonesia dating back to the fifties. With that, *basic values* reflected the romanticising view many Dutch people have of the country. Within the framework of the current exhibition Zico Albaiquni will critically reflect on the exhibition of de vries with the work *Ruwatan Tanah Air Beta, Reciting Rites in its Sites* (2019).

In addition to our own thinking, the (historical) mission of expansion and exploitation forms the basis of many cultural institutions that have helped shape that thinking. Museums and botanical gardens show us ways of organising, categorising and defining an unknown world from colonial times to the present. With the exhibition *On the Nature of Botanical Gardens*, Framer Framed aims to link the critical analysis of museums it built up over the past decade to a study of botanical gardens. By (re)introducing local Indonesian histories and forms of knowledge about nature, the exhibition also wants to go beyond the problematisation of the colonial past and to arrive at new ideas about ownership and contemporary art in modern day Indonesia.

Framer Framed

---

# ON THE NATURE OF BOTANICAL GARDENS

*Contemporary Indonesian Perspectives*

**Botanical gardens exist around the world and have become associated with idyllic and exotic nature. This exhibition looks at the role of botanical gardens as tools of empire, with a focus on Indonesia. It regards botanical gardens as a key site in which colonial power was literally rooted.**

*On the Nature of Botanical Gardens* critically investigates the colonial quest for natural resources, profits, and power that formed the context for the establishment and consolidation of botanical science and gardens. To move beyond the colonial order of the botanical garden the exhibition seeks to actively relink with indigenous legacies and knowledges that were rendered invisible and inaudible in colonial narratives much in the manner of Walter D. Mignolo's concept 'decoloniality' (2018). This idea advocates for a decolonial way of thinking, living, doing, knowing, sensing and being that precede the colonial enterprise and invasion. The frame and orientation of the exhibition is thus decolonial, looking at the darker colonial side of botanical gardens and connecting to coexisting realities of nature that are part of our past, our present, and our future.

## Human, Nature and Botanical Gardens

The idea of nature as separate from humans and humanity did not always exist and does not exist everywhere. It is for example not present in indigenous cosmologies outside the European and Anglo-American realms, but developed under the influence of Christian theology, Enlightenment and the European Renaissance. The emergence of the idea of man/human made it possible for man to distance himself from nature. By the mid-18th century man/human had become separated from nature which became something to be controlled, dominated and exploited, and further reduced to being natural resources. Existing between the domains of economics and politics, nature was utilised to establish power and build empires.

In this context, botanical gardens started to emerge in Europe from the 16th century onwards, often in connection to schools of medicine with a focus on medicinal herbs. In the first stages of colonialism, knowledge of specific plants and their environments

was crucial to fight diseases on the long overseas journeys. Apothecaries and surgeons on board of the United East India Company (Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, VOC) ships, were instructed to bring along branches and leaves of interesting and highly sought-after spices like pepper, nutmeg, mace, clovers and cinnamon.

In the 18th and 19th century botanic knowledge was an important aspect of controlling nature to exercise rational control over, and collection of, the main source of revenue, agriculture as well as the taming of chance. The knowledge also contributed to the development of the massive plantations that were an important element of the colonial economies. The transplantation of not just plants, but also of expertise, experience and botanical knowledge took place through expansive networks that connected the colonies to Europe and vice versa. These networks consisted of a wide range of actors such as botanic amateurs and scientists, who worked individually or within an institutional context, connected to the global and the local.

### Botanical gardens in Indonesia

In pre-colonial Indonesia, German-born employee of the VOC, Georg Eberhardt Rumphius (1627-1702) established a medicinal and forest garden (*Dusun Rumphius*) on the island of Ambon in the late 1660s. He also extensively documented Ambonese nature in the six volumes *Herbarium Amboinense* that was published posthumously in 1741 as the VOC considered the work to contain too much sensitive information, which shows the economic value of the work.

The idea of a 'landscaped' garden stems from the idea that nature can be controlled and cultivated for the benefit of human/man. The VOC established a garden and mansion at the site of the present Botanical Gardens in Bogor, formerly called Buitenzorg, in 1744. The British turned the garden into a place of leisure between 1811-1815. *The 's Lands Plantentuin* (National Botanical Garden) was officially founded in 1817 by German-born botanist Caspar Georg Carl Reinwardt (1773-1854), who was then the head of agriculture, arts and science of the Dutch colony. Reinwardt gathered plants and seeds of economic potential from all over the archipelago and brought them to the garden for cultivation. The establishment of a number of gardens throughout the archipelago followed. Currently there are nine botanical gardens in Indonesia which are largely used for scientific and leisure purposes. Kebun Raya Bogor in Bogor is the most famous one.

*On the Nature of Botanical Gardens* features nine contemporary Indonesian artists whose works investigate the coloniality – the dark side – of botanical gardens, the building of a Dutch colonial empire, knowledge building and the economics of nature. The exhibition looks at the legacies and current consequences of approaching nature and plants in this way. It asks what was lost in the process of colonialism and explore what was ignored, orientalised or destroyed by colonial botanists that lead to a hierarchy of knowledge(s) of nature. The artists in the exhibition look at what knowledge systems of nature and cosmologies preceded colonial botanical

knowledge in Indonesia and reconnect with those myriad ways of knowing, living, sensing, thinking and being nature in that already existed, and are still there and will be there for the future.

By Sadiyah Boonstra

Jakarta, January 2020

---

## LITERATURE

1—Walter D. Mignolo, Catherine E. Walsh (2018) *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*. Durham/London: Duke University Press

2—Walter D. Mignolo (2017) "Coloniality Is Far from Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality" in: *Afterall: a Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 43, pp. 38-45

3—Phillipe Descola (2013) *Beyond Nature and Culture*. Chicago/London: Chicago University Press

4—Zaheer Baber (2016) "The Plants of Empire: Botanic Gardens, Colonial Power and Botanical Knowledge", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 46:4, pp. 659-679

5—C.E. Jarvis (2019) "Georg Rumphius' Herbarium Amboinense (1741-1750) as a source of information on Indonesian plants for Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778)" in *Gardens' Bulletin Singapore* 71 (Suppl. 2):87-107

6—Andreas Weber (2018) "A Garden as a Niche: Botany and Imperial Politics in the Early Nineteenth Century Dutch Empire" in *Studium*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (2018) pp. 178-190

7—Andreas Weber & Robert-Jan Wille (2018) "Laborious Transformations: Plants and Politics at the Bogor Botanical Gardens" in *Studium*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (2018), pp.169-177

8—Eng Soon Teoh (2019) *Orchids as Aphrodisiac, Medicine or Food*. Basel: Springer International Publishing

The lecture (Dec 2019) *Memoria Plantae: Perspectives on the Dutch Botanical Network* was organised in collaboration with the Westfries Museum.

# ARTISTS

## ZICO ALBAIQUNI

*Ruwatan Tanah Air Beta,  
Reciting Rites in its Sites* (2019)

Oil and synthetic polymer on canvas,  
600 x 200 cm.

Courtesy of the artist & Yavuz Gallery.

Commissioned by Framer Framed,  
funded by Mondriaan Fund.

For this exhibition Albaiquni painted various historical layers and narratives of the Kebun Raya Bogor (National Botanical Garden Bogor) to question colonially constructed meanings and to reconnect with preceding and continuing practices, narratives and histories. It manifests collective memories encompassing three different cultures and histories: the Sundanese - the native ethnic group of West Java -, the colonial, and the Indonesian nation.

Albaiquni's inspiration source is a traditional Sundanese ritual called *ruwatan*. It cleanses the world from bad omens and facilitates by reconnecting with nature, the ancestor spirits, and God. Albaiquni attended a ruwatan, that was held at the pavilion in Kebun Raya Bogor - depicted in the painting - to show the local spiritual community his good intentions and to start conversations about remembering, connecting and reimagining different beliefs, traditions, cultures, and histories of Java.

The painting references to a number of objects, sites and moments that connect to different layers in history in order to shift the viewer's perspective towards Sundanese cultural values. The stone statue of the Hindu deity Nandi - as documented in the collection of the Tropenmuseum - is in Sundanese

spiritual belief (Sunda Wiwitan) a site for sacred rituals, which represents the folklore prince Mundinglaya. The depiction of the Dutch cemetery in the Kebun Raya, painted by Indonesia's foremost painter Raden Saleh in *Het Kerkhof in het Park te Bogor met Graven* (1871) is nowadays a park featuring a children's playground and decorated with bamboo. According to the local spiritual community the bamboo calms the Dutch spirits buried in the graveyard. The flat rice baskets comment on herman de vries' exhibition *basic values* (Venice Biennale, Italy 2015 and Erasmus Huis, Jakarta 2015). herman de vries presented different types of rice to illustrate the biological wealth of Java while in Sundanese tradition rice carries sacred meaning and is commonly used in ruwatan.

Zico Albaiquni's (b. 1987 Bandung, Indonesia) vibrant figurative and landscape paintings play with aspects of Indonesian art history and notions of painterly representation. He particularly deploys references to various Indonesian traditions such as *Mooi Indië* (beautiful Indies) painting - a genre of painting capturing romanticised scenes of the Indonesian landscape and people under Dutch colonial rule. Albaiquni's unusual and intriguing colour palette stems from the tonal formulas of this early painting tradition. His large-scale works challenge conventional perspectives and formats.



Zico Albaiquni - *Ruwatan Tanah Air Beta, Reciting Rites in its Sites* (2019),  
 Courtesy of the artist & Yavuz Gallery

## ARAHMAIANI

### *Memory of Nature* (2013-2019)

Wood, soil & seeds, 300 x 300 cm,  
 tables 60 x 60 cm.

Courtesy of the artist.

*Memory of Nature* was first created after Arahmaiani actively started to work and study with Tibetan monks at the Tibet Plateau, a vast elevated plateau in Central and East Asia. Tibetan monks commonly make Mandala sand paintings during rituals. The work is an interpretation of a mandala, which is a concentric diagram with spiritual and ritual significance for Buddhists. The word mandala stems from Hindu Sanskrit and means 'essence' or 'containing', but it can also

be translated as 'circle-circumference' or 'completion'. The mandala shape refers to the basic pattern of the Borobudur temple in Yogyakarta, the largest Buddhist temple in the world.

Mandalas represent the universe, and in the same way *Memory of Nature* reminds us of our own relationship with nature. The work is also about nature and environmental issues by using natural materials such as wood, soil and vegetation. It is a reflection and reinterpretation of the meaning of mandala in today's context. According to Arahmaiani there should be metaphysical values and ethics that support living in harmony with nature and respect for the environment. Without this, the natural will simply

be regarded as an object for people to exploit.

The audience is invited to participate in the work and create a mandala with seeds, arranged above the wooden tables. This contemplative and meditative work is meant to evoke memories of the universe and how we all relate to one another.

Arahmaiani's work deals with contemporary politics, violence, critique of capital and the female body. Her own identity as Muslim mediates between Islamic, Hindu, Buddhist, and animist beliefs. She combines her critical attitude toward Islam with a fight against its general stigmatisation. Since 2010 she has been working with

Tibetan monks at the Tibet Plateau to deal with environmental issues.

## ADE DARMAWAN

### *Tuban* (2019)

Installation with distillation process, books, pottery, spices, seawater, leaves, stones, and soil.

Courtesy of the artist.

Special thanks for the research on Tuban: Samuel 'gentong' Bagas, Ferry Eko Purnawan and the Tuban crew.

Ade Darmawan's (b. 1974 Jakarta, Indonesia) installation is inspired by the book *Arus Balik* (1995), written by Indonesia's foremost novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer. He was



Arahmaiani - *Memory of Nature* (2013-2019) | Photo: Eva Broekema



Ade Darmawan - *Tuban* (2019),  
 Courtesy of the artist and NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore | Photo: Eva Broekema

specifically interested in how different characters in the book use natural resources. Darmawan undertook a field trip to the city of Tuban, that plays a central role in the book, and to the nearby town of Bojonegoro, a major producer of teakwood and tobacco.

The installation consists of laboratory equipment to transform natural resources, like spices and plants through the distillation process using sea water from Tuban. For example, pala (nutmeg), fundamental for its preservation qualities during long sea travel; cendana (sandalwood); kayu manis (cinnamon); lada (pepper); kemiri (candlenut); daun cengkeh (clover leaf); daun sirih (betel leaf); daun nipah (attap palm); daun kelapa (coconut leaf).

Darmawan's laboratory setting is a reminder that the scramble for control of the archipelago and its sea passages was about the extraction of natural resources and goods facilitated by a vast network of global trade relations. It also connects to the understanding of *Arus Balik* as a metaphor for various times in history. The focus on natural resources marks the transition from a maritime orientation towards land-oriented state ideologies with a specific reference to Suharto's New Order regime (1965-1998). The laboratory set spews the transformed spices and plants onto the pages of books produced by Suharto's regime, spoiling the nationalist ideas conveyed on the pages of the books.

Ade Darmawan lives and works in Jakarta as an artist, curator and director of the artist collective ruangrupa. He studied at Indonesia Art Institute (ISI), in the Graphic Arts Department. In 1998, a year after his first solo exhibition at the Cemeti Contemporary Art Gallery, Yogyakarta (now Cemeti Art House), he attended a two-year residency at the Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten in Amsterdam. His works range from installation, objects, drawing, digital print, and video.

As a curator, he has contributed in *Riverscape in-flux* (2012), *Media Art Kitchen* (2013), *Condition Report* (2016), and *Negotiating the Future: 6th Asian Art Biennial in Taiwan*. From 2006-2009, he was a member of the Jakarta Arts Council, which led him to be appointed to become the artistic director of Jakarta Biennale in 2009. He is the executive director of Jakarta Biennale during its 2013, 2015 and 2017. Together with ruangrupa he co-curated *TRANSaction: Sonsbeek* (2016). For *Dokumenta 15* in Kassel (2022) ruangrupa is appointed artistic director.

## EDWIN

*Hortus* (2014)  
 Two-channel digital projection,  
 shot on 16 mm film, black and white, 09' 45".  
 Courtesy of the artist.

Edwin's interests lies in the sensuality of cinema. Experience, imagination, memory are all results of the sensory experience of hearing, smelling, sight, taste and touch. In connection to these starting-points, Edwin sourced archival film material from Eye Film Institute, the Netherlands. He then decided to

confront those visual materials with new materials shot inside the Hortus Botanicus in Amsterdam.

The juxtaposition of archival material produced in colonial Indonesia with newly shot, sexually explicit images in a two-channel video work reveals the perversity of colonial practices of exoticising and sexualising people and nature. The rhythm of the ethnographic clips is synchronised with the pornographic images which results in a dialectic relation between materials that is simultaneously revealing and affecting each other's meaning. The films create a discomfort that forces the viewer to reflect on their perspectives, complicity and ideas of nostalgia, guilt, explicit voyeurism, repetition and exploitation in colonialism and pornography and the perversity thereof.

Edwin (b. 1978, Surabaya, Indonesia) is a filmmaker from Indonesia. He studied graphic design at Universitas Kristen Petra in Surabaya and later on film at Institut Kesenian Jakarta. In 2013 he got his Master of Art in filmmaking from the Dutch Film Academy at the Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten. In 2009 he was a guest at the Berlinale with his short film *Trip to The Wound* (2007). That same year, his feature film debut *Blind Pig Who Wants to Fly* (2008) received the Fipresci Award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam. *Postcards from the Zoo* (2012) is his second feature film for which he also wrote the screenplay. The film celebrated its world premiere at the 62nd Berlinale and was presented in Competition. With *Posesif* (2017), his third feature, he won Best Director Award at Festival Film Indonesia.





Edwin - *Hortus* (2014)



His Latest Feature Film *Aruna and Her Palate* (2018) premiered at the Berlinale in 2018.

Edwin is now preparing his feature film adaptation of Eka Kurniawan's *Vengeance is Mine, All Others Pay Cash*.

Based on archival material from Eye Film Institute Netherlands. 16 mm footage processed at the Filmwerkplaats, Rotterdam. Production supported by Lemming Film and Master of Film, Netherlands Film Academy, Amsterdamse Hogeschool voor de Kunsten. Special thanks to Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde, Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, and L'Etna, Atelier de cinéma expérimental.

#### SAMUEL INDRATMA

*Putri Penunggu Pohon* (2018)  
China ink on canvas, 300 x 145 cm.

—

*Dewa and Dewi Penunggu Pohon* (2019-2020)

Shadow Puppets: synthetic leather, various sizes.

Collaboration with Pesantren Cigaru-Majenang-Indonesia.

*Sintren - Save the planet* (2019)

Video animation, 15' 00".

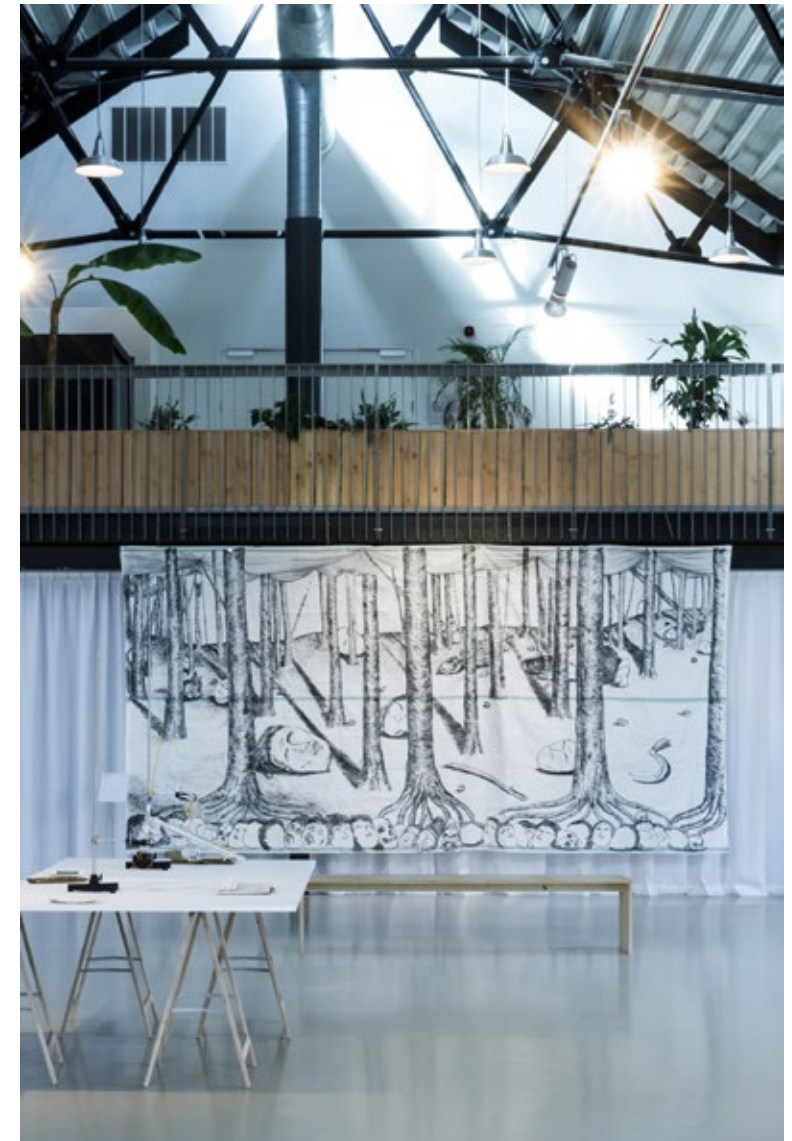
Collaboration with students of Komputama High School-Majenang. Courtesy of the artist and collaborators.

This installation is a combination of three works that have been developed over time. Samuel created the initial painting *Putri Penunggu Pohon* in 2018. For this exhibition he developed two additional works as a 3d rendering of the original 3d painting.

Samuel's approach to nature is informed by Javanese beliefs that are historically syncretised with Hindu-Buddhist beliefs. In his work there is hardly a distinction between human, nature and animals as they form one holistic cosmology. His often hybrid creations are simultaneously animals, plants and trees with human traits and characteristics, all depicted as having a soul and intention.

For this exhibition Samuel created a cosmology of trees and tree guardians in the form of shadow puppets. In traditional Javanese belief under influence of Hinduism, forests and trees are seen as guardians for themselves and those around them. When the knowledge of care and conservation of trees and forest have become commonplace everything and everyone will prosper. This idea is further developed in the accompanying animation which tells a mythical story about saving the planet.

Samuel Indratma (b. 1970 Gombong, Indonesia) is a community visual artist and muralist, who studied graphic art between 1990 and 1996 at the faculty of Fine Art, Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He was a prominent member of the left wing, activist group of artists Apotik Komik, operating between 1997 and 2005, creating public art in Yogyakarta. The group considered their public art as a tool of social communication. Indratma also co-founded the Yogyakarta Mural Forum in 2005. For over the past three years, Samuel has been working on cultivating wayang, Indonesian shadow puppetry. He has done various works related to wayang, from drawing, painting, batik, installations, pottery



Ipeh Nur - *Perken* (2019), Courtesy of the artist and collaborators | Photo: Eva Broekema

and performances. His solo exhibitions include *The Interpretation of Sureq La Galigo* (Singapore, 2004) and *Urban Apartment* (Melbourne, 2007–2008).

## LIFEPATCH

### ***Spectacular Healing* (2019)**

Two channel video, 3' 53" en 6' 58"

In collaboration with Manguji Nababan for transcribing and translating the Pustaka.

Courtesy of the artist.

This two-channel video work is part of Lifepatch's ongoing research related to colonialism of the Batak tribe in North Sumatra. It's starting point is the *pustaka*, books that contain knowledge of medicinal herbs and traditional healing practices of the Batak. During colonial times hundreds of *pustaka* were taken from Sumatra and ended up in European archives, collections and libraries which led to the loss of particular knowledges.

Pustaka are evidence of Batak's practice to glean herbs and use them as common goods and in healing practices. This practice contrasts sharply with colonial commercial purposes of collecting and categorizing plants to monopolize knowledge and with today's strive for industrial patents on commercial medication.

For this exhibition Lifepatch developed a two-channel video work that depicts a practice in which people use traditional healing methods similar to those described in *pustaka* to cure current diseases. One video displays the process of *jamu*-making from natural materials, such as roots, bark, flowers, seeds, leaves, and fruits. The second

video shows Lifepatch's process of understanding, processing, and developing this work in which Lifepatch discusses the relationship between the botanical garden, traditional healing methods, and decolonisation with a number of collaborators.

Lifepatch was founded in 2012 by a number of people from various disciplines coming from both formal and non-formal education. It is a citizen initiative in the arts, science and technology and a community-based cross-disciplinary organisation. Lifepatch invites members and anyone involved in their activities to research, explore and develop the presence of technology, natural resources, and human resources in the surrounding area. Lifepatch members have a mission to be useful in developing the potential of local, human and natural resources. They are also invested in building bridges through domestic and international collaboration, giving anyone open access to research resources and the results of developments that have been carried out.

## IPEH NUR

### ***Perken* (2019)**

Acrylic on sacks of rice, 470 x 240 cm.

Courtesy of the artist.

Banda Islands is part of the so-called Spice Islands of the Moluccas. It is the single origin of the nutmeg, which comes from the tree called *Myristica fragrans* (fragrant nutmeg or true nutmeg) in the European botanical system. Today the yellow seed can be found in kitchens all over the world as

aromatic cooking spice. This small seed was initially a blessing to the Bandanese but led to immense tragedy.

The lucrative trade in nutmeg - worth more than gold in the 17th century - became a driver and lubricant for colonialism. The scramble for a trade monopoly on the rare nutmeg led to violent clashes between European powers and mass extermination of the Bandanese ordered by Jan Pieterszoon Coen (1587-1629), then Governor General of the VOC in 1621. He replaced them with enslaved people from Java, Bali and Bugis. This led to the development of a multicultural society in Banda which continues to give rise to questions of identity. Today, a younger generation of Indonesians understand how important nutmeg was for the colonisation of land that would be called Indonesia from 1945 onwards. In light of such identity issues, the artist creates artworks to remember this history.

In this work Ipeh depicts the plantation plots (*perken*) for nutmeg. Those who work under the hot sun in *perken* are locals and enslaved people from other parts of Indonesia. The way in which Ipeh depicts the *perken* conveys the violence and death in which the nutmeg trees were literally rooted. The artist painted on *bagor* - rice bags - which are, much like nutmeg, used for trade.

Ipeh Nur's (b. 1993, Yogyakarta, Indonesia) work departs from personal experiences, such as anxiety, fear, cynicism, skepticism, her own life and experience, or in response to problems that occur around her. She loves dramatic visuals, creating interactions within her work, using objects outside

the narrative, as if someone was responding to an image in the work. Most of her works are black and white on paper. She also uses other techniques and media, such as screen printing, etching, batik, murals and sculptures in resin. Ipeh's latest work focuses on history and dives into the conquest of Banda Neira in 1621.

## ELIA NURVISTA

### ***Noble Savage Series #1 - #3* (2018)**

Print on canvas, 3 panels, 80 x 100 cm each.

—

### ***Noble Savage Series #4 - #5* (2019)**

Print on canvas, 2 panels, 80 x 100 cm each.

Courtesy of the artist.

Funded by KfW Stiftung.

Elia's work focuses on the meaning of food in a sociopolitical, economic and cultural context and turns her critical thought process into artworks of different media. As a starting-point for these works Elia asked the question: 'what is foreign?'. Some fruits, like pomegranates and figs, are hard to find in Indonesia. The transplantation of such fruits from other countries to the archipelago was facilitated through botanical knowledge and the vast trade networks established by colonialism and imperialism.

### ***The Noble Savages Series #1-#5***

comments on the colonial dynamics that underlie the perceptions of why fruits from abroad are seen as 'exotic'. Whereas people from the same countries who come to Europe as refugees, are regarded as 'foreign' or 'alien' and subsequently rejected as such. Elia added brand labels of 'Old Masters' and quality control labels to



Lifepatch - *Spectacular Healing* (2019)



Ipeh Nur - *Perken* (2019)

classical European still life paintings downloaded from the internet. She turned historical pictures of the *noble savage* (a depicted character embodying indigenous or wild humans) into collages by adding contemporary features, showing that colonial dynamics continue to painfully exist today. The additions to the work add critical layers of meanings to the images and simultaneously transform them into new autonomous works of art.

Elia Nurvita (b. 1983 Yogyakarta, Indonesia) uses different media to focus on issues and discourses around food and eating. Her interdisciplinary and community-based approach is based on the idea that food and eating are intrinsically linked to more abstract levels of politics, society and culture. She founded an interdisciplinary study group called Bakudapan, which investigates the meaning of food in socio-political, economic and cultural contexts on a local and global scale.

#### SINTA TANTRA

*Kebun Raya / Kebun Saya* (2020)

Mural, Found postcards, mixed media, 120 x 275 cm.

Courtesy of the artist.

Commissioned by Framer Framed, funded by Mondrian Fund.

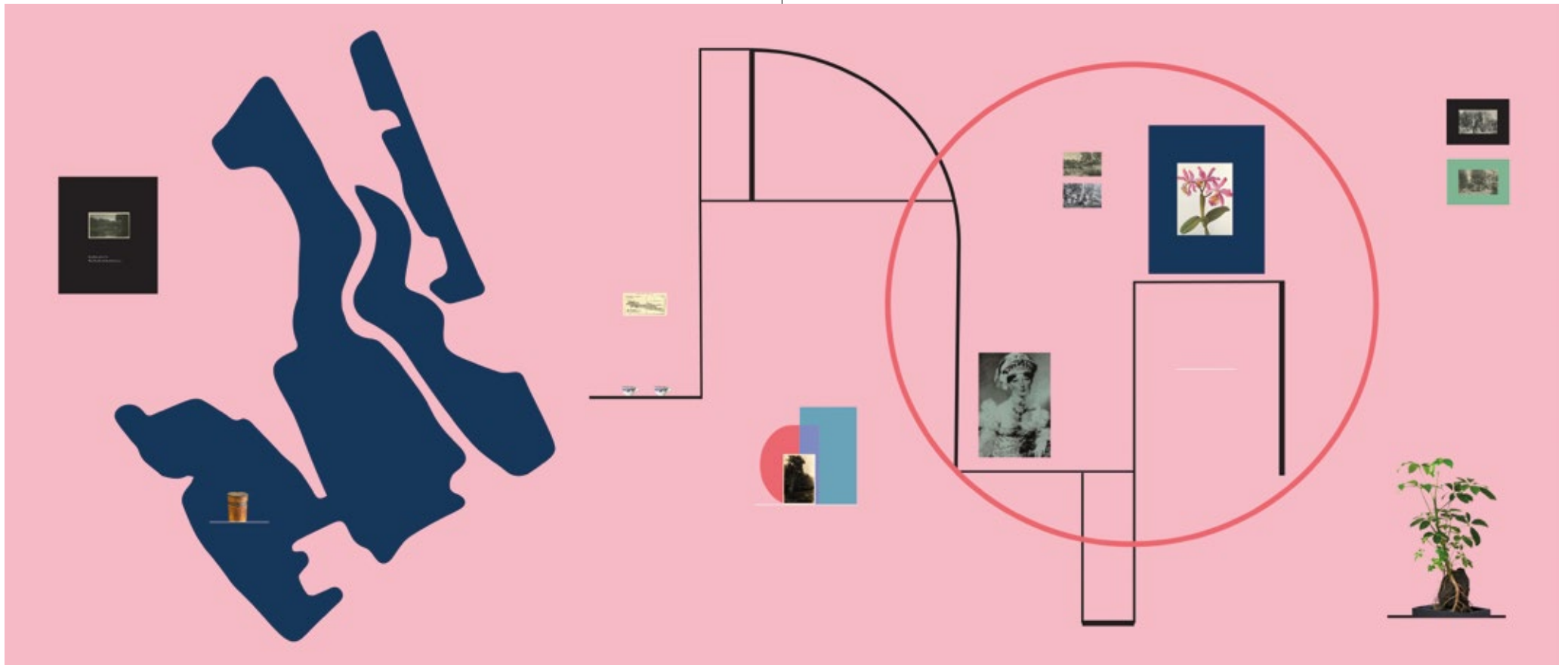
*Kebun Raya / Kebun Saya* takes its inspiration from the botanical gardens of Bali and Bogor, Indonesia. Geometric wall drawings - based on blueprint plans of the gardens are presented alongside archived materials and artefacts in a museum or salon-like display.

Tantra explores the gardens in Bogor and Bali as a place of botany and leisure, but also where colonisers of the past and the tourism of today play a vital role in its own exoticism and story - taming the wild, savage and raw with picturesque moments of a 'landscaped' Indonesia. Here nature becomes art, art becomes artifice, and artifice becomes narrative - categorised and contained, constructed and real.

Tantra calls these installations 'assemblages', where artefacts and art are displayed simultaneously. They generate a dialogue between past and present, the one identity with another, creating a new system of looking and a more subjective way of thinking.

Who decides what becomes preserved or destroyed? Like nature, can our knowledge and value systems mutate, adapt, evolve? Are Indonesians ever able to leave their colonial past behind? Sinta Tantra (b. 1978 New York, USA) is known for her fascination with colour and composition. Her work is an experiment in scale and dimension, a hybridity of pop and formalism, an exploration of identity and aesthetics. Her work now ranges from small painted canvases to architectural installations, from bold, tropical colour to a Calder-like minimalism.





Sinta Tantra - *Kebun Raya / Kebun Saya* (2020)

---

ABOUT THE CURATOR OF

# ON THE NATURE OF BOTANICAL GARDENS

*Contemporary Indonesian Perspectives*

**Sadiah Boonstra** is a scholar-curator based in Jakarta. She received her PhD from Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam with the dissertation *Changing Wayang Scenes. Heritage Formation and Wayang Performance Practice in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia* (2014).

She is currently Asia Scholar at The University of Melbourne and Curator of Public Programmes at Asia TOPA, Melbourne. Her research and curatorial interests focus on the cultural history, heritage and performing arts of colonial and contemporary Indonesia in relation to the Netherlands and their representation in museums and performing arts.

---

## COLOPHON

### TEXT AND EDITING

Sadiah Boonstra  
Betul Ellialtioglu  
Frederique Pisuise  
Annosh Urbanke  
Nina Vaessen  
The participating artists

### TRANSLATION

Frederique Pisuise  
Annosh Urbanke  
Nina Vaessen

### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Studio Montero

### COVER IMAGE

Zico Albaquni

### FRAMER FRAMED TEAM

Cas Bool  
Betul Ellialtioglu  
Jean Medina  
Merel Overgaag  
Josien Pieterse  
Kim Schuiten  
Nayera Shalaby  
Annosh Urbanke  
Nina Vaessen  
Yvonique Wellen  
Yating Yu

Special thanks to all the volunteers.





ADDRESS

Framer Framed  
Oranje-Vrijstaatkade 71  
1093 KS Amsterdam

---

OPEN

Tue – Fri: 12:00 – 19:00  
Sat – Sun: 11:00 – 18:00

---

CONTACT

[press@framerframed.nl](mailto:press@framerframed.nl)  
[framerframed.nl](http://framerframed.nl)

FOLLOW US:

   /framerframed