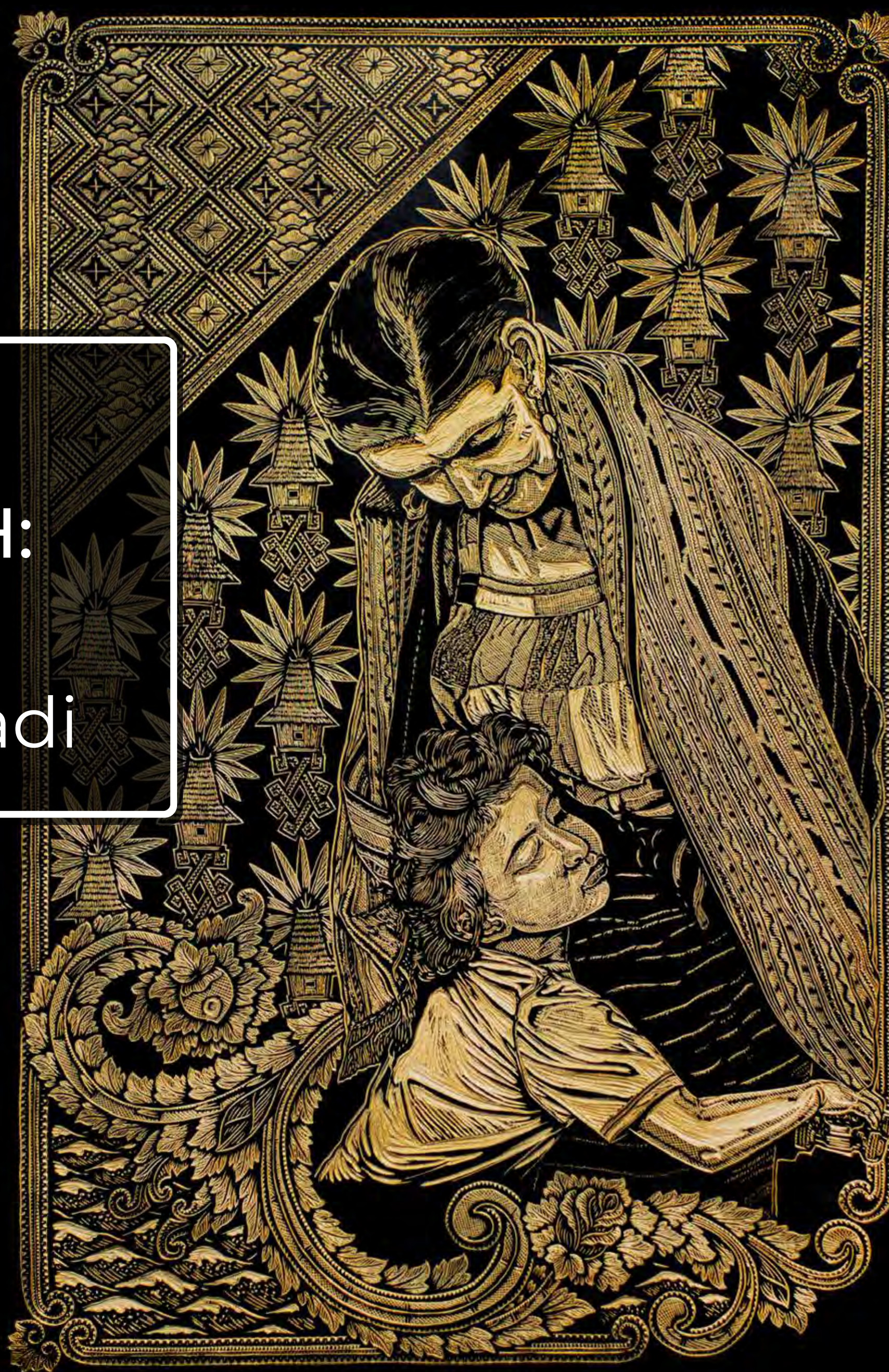


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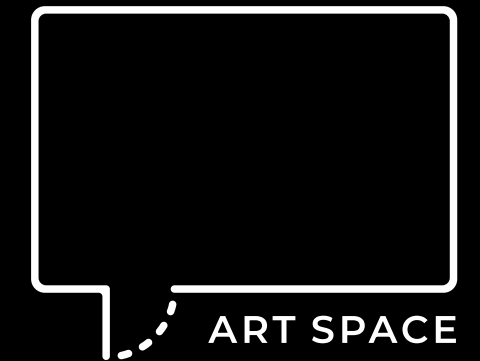
PERJALANAN SEBUAH KISAH: Life as it happens

A Solo Exhibition by **Djuwadi**



Presented by

BLUEPRINT



ART SPACE

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ESSAY BY ALECIA NEO

Working across woodcut printing and carving, street murals, visual and performance art, and collaborative public projects, Indonesian artist Djuwadi's works are a process of journeying with and being in this world. As John Berger says, "Home is no longer a dwelling but the untold story of a life being lived." The stories that Djuwadi tells through his art move across time, place and cultures, and are intertwined with movement itself.

Perjalanan sebuah kisah presents some 39 woodcut prints and blocks shaped by the artist's evolving dialogue between past and present, informed by his experiences of living and travelling across Indonesia, Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, Japan, India, Australia, and Southeast Asia.

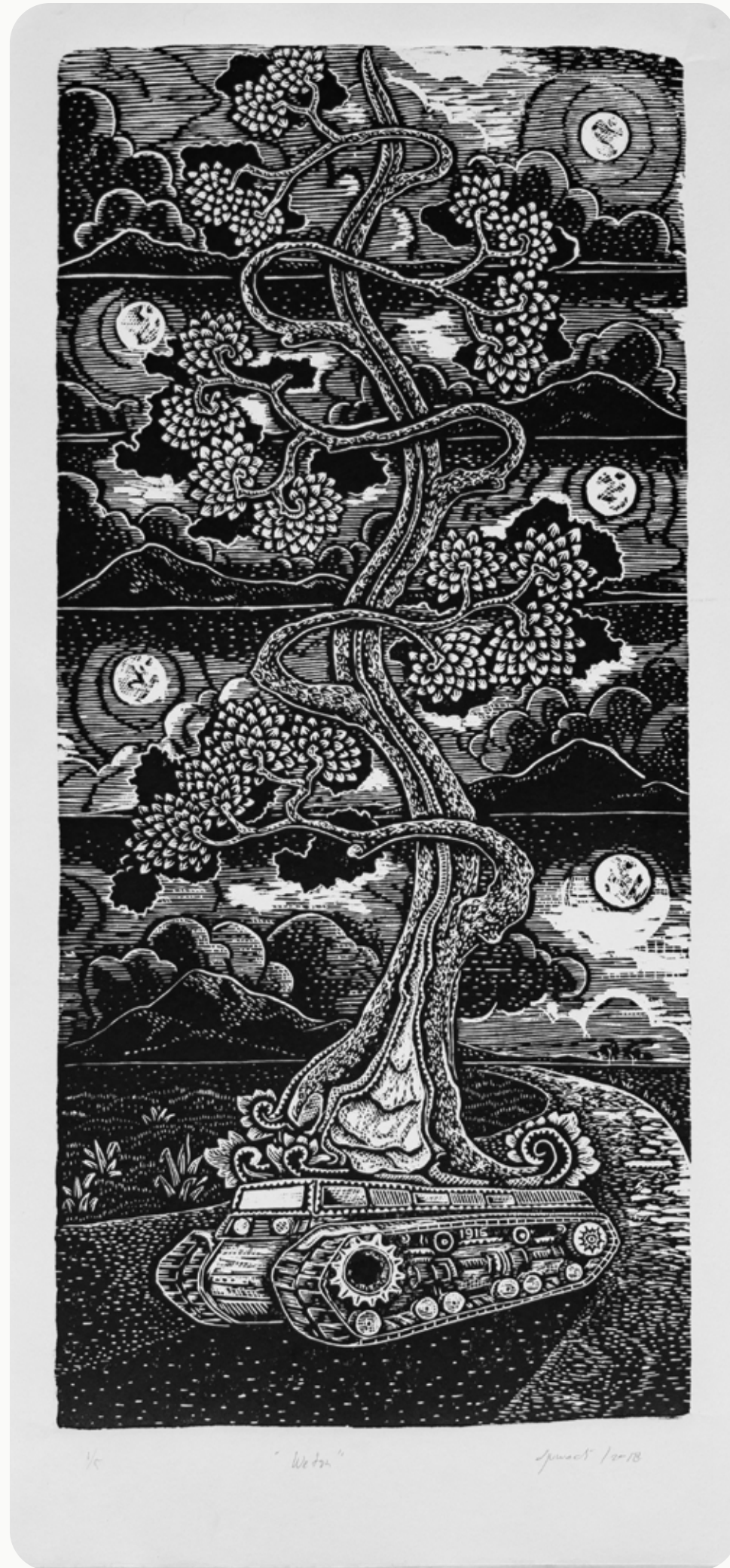
With years of experience in artmaking and cultural-organising, he is known for his lively energy and intuitive ability to connect with people. His work is deeply rooted in community engagement and social justice, which have shaped the themes recurring in his work, including ecological stewardship, lives of indigenous and rural communities, democracy, political participation, as well as personal and collective memory. Instead of a studio-based practice, he often works through collaborative processes such as workshops in public spaces, where art becomes a social activity and a means of building empathy and relationships.

Early Influences

Born 1974, Djuwadi was raised in Randublatung village in Blora Regency, Central Java, surrounded by one of Indonesia's largest teak wood forests. Reflecting on the forest's profound impact on his being and art practice, he lamented, "When I was a child, it was so easy to see animals roaming our forests and villages. We would see many deer, monkeys and birds like peacocks in our village, and spend our time hunting eels, frogs and crabs. It's a very different story for the young generation today." With Indonesia's state-led drive to expand bioethanol energy, his hometown's rich teak forests continue to be a target for extraction.

Djuwadi's father worked for the state-run forestry department in a teak plantation and brought him to

observe local Javanese woodcarving masters and carpenters at their workshops after primary school hours. Drawn by the materiality of wood, Djuwadi spent hours wandering around the workshops picking up wooden off-cuts, immersed in the cacophony of woodwork. His sincerity won over a few woodcarving masters, who guided him through an informal apprenticeship, grounding him in the most basic and laborious skills such as sharpening tools and sanding furniture. Over time, he was allowed to try more challenging techniques. His junior high school teacher nurtured Djuwadi's artistic flair through free private drawing lessons and local art competitions, and noted the distinct Javanese style of intricate flora and fauna motifs, geometric patterns and zoomorphic forms that flowed into Djuwadi's sketches with ease.

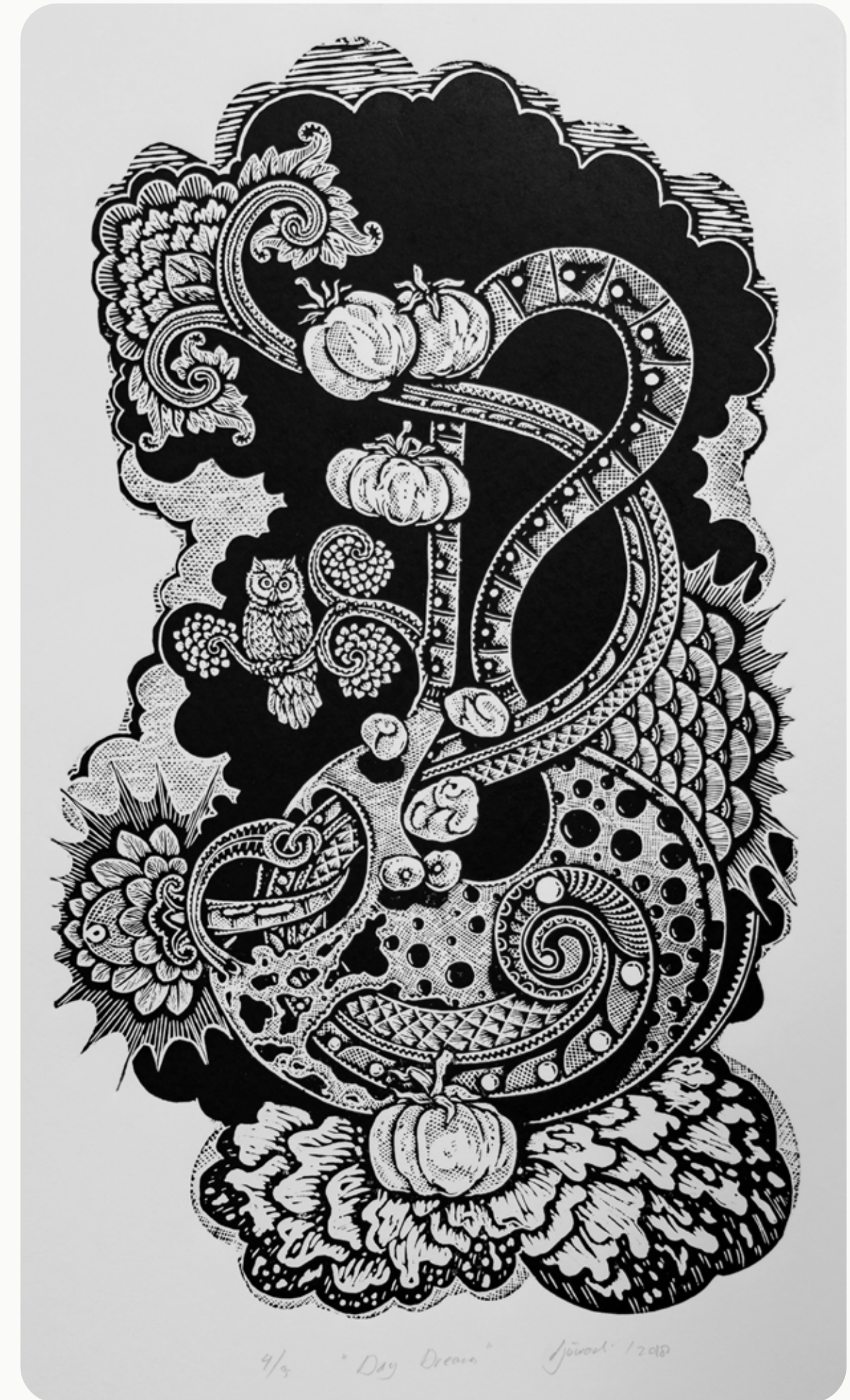


Weton #1 (2019), 66cm x 30.5cm

In the woodcut print titled *Weton #1* (2019), Djuwadi pays homage to his Javanese roots. Etymologically, the Javanese calendar calculation system 'weton' originates from the Javanese word 'wetu', meaning birth or to emerge. Born on Friday, as well as on the fourth day of the Javanese market week¹, Djuwadi was named by his parents according to these traditions. Against the backdrop of five luminous moons representing the lunar calendar, the piece is anchored by a lush teak tree in the form of a large Kris of Lok 5 (five curves) emerging from a military tank charging forward on tarred ground. The tank represents modern weaponry and modern structures that threaten traditional and indigenous knowledge, while the kris symbolises local indigenous culture and knowledge, their potency to cut through the illusions of capitalism and human's obsession with expansion. The work conveys Djuwadi's hope for communities to come together to build strong foundations and infrastructures for the exchange of local knowledge and the connection with history.

¹ *Legi, Pahing, Pon, Wage* and *Kliwon* are the five days of the traditional Javanese market week. Djuwadi's name is an acronym, DJemUah WAge DadI, formed from Jemuah or Jum'at (Friday), Wage (the fourth day in the Javanese calendar) and Dadi ('to become or to be born').

Day Dream (2018) illustrates the strength he draws from his Javanese lineage in face of the conditions of a solitary life. Made during his time living in Timor-Leste with his family, Djuwadi often made contemplative and deeply personal works which reflect his state of mind and a yearning for belonging. In the striking image, a lone owl is framed by three plant blooms representing Javanese teachings: Never be arrogant, remember where you come from, and be mindful of your actions. Bringing to mind spiritually symbolic motifs on the reliefs of Borobudur in Java, the artwork is girded by the mythical Naga (serpent) that brings cosmic balance, embodying both life-giving and destructive energies, reminding us of the interconnectedness of all things.



Day Dream (2018), 54cm x 30cm

Foundational Movements and Political Awakenings

Appreciating Djuwadi's socially-engaged art practice involves understanding the socio-political context he has been shaped by. After graduating from vocational school where he trained in wood construction, he left the village and sought work in Jakarta. Due to the proximity of one of his workplaces to Universitas Indonesia (UI), during the rise of the democratic movement in Jakarta, Djuwadi often heard passionate student-led rallies which drew him to attending the demonstrations at the university where academics and activists discussed national politics. On 27 July 1996, under Suharto's instructions, the military attempted to take over the office of the Indonesian Democratic Party,

which was occupied by supporters of the recently ousted party leader Megawati Sukarnoputri. This violence led to riots in the city where the artist witnessed looting and further violence, including protesters jumping off buildings. The artist's intense experiences during the period leading up to and following Suharto's fall from power in 1998 sparked his political awakening, laying the foundation for his practice of using art as a tool for social change.

That same year, Djuwadi's life was upended by his father's sudden death. As the eldest son, Djuwadi chose to take up the parenting role to care for his younger siblings who were still in primary school. Leaving his stable job in Jakarta, Djuwadi received modest financial support and began the journey of developing his professional woodcarving skills

by working with neighbours and friends in the furniture industry in his hometown.

Woodcut Print as Activism

Modern woodcut printing in Asia can be traced to the prolific Chinese intellectual Lu Xun, who was struck by the bold, impactful imagery of woodcut prints. He passionately introduced this practice in 1931 to a group of young Chinese artists, sharing with them social realist woodcut prints he had bought from European and Soviet artists. Lu Xun encouraged artists to freely draw inspiration from these expressive prints, to advocate for working-class issues, to fight against apathy, and tirelessly campaigned

for the New Woodcut Movement before his untimely death five years later. The reproducible and affordable nature of woodcut prints allowed artists to circulate images and social commentary that educated people and supported political organising. Its use of everyday life and language democratised access to art and ideas, changing the understanding of art and authorship. At the level of craftsmanship, the embodied way of transferring ink onto paper with the weight of one's physical body foregrounded the hand-made quality of each edition of woodcut prints.



Djuwadi conducting a woodcut printing workshop during a gathering of The Long Run members on Nikoi Island in 2023.
Photo credit: Leanna Crowley.

Djuwadi's first exposure to woodcut print as an art form and socially engaged practice began in 1999 when a friend introduced him to the Yogyakarta art collective Taring Padi. At the time, the collective was freshly established as Institute of People Oriented Culture Taring Padi (Lembaga Budaya Kerakyatan Taring Padi) and was a gathering of students from Indonesian Art Institute of Yogyakarta who were fervent supporters of democracy and the arts as a pathway to political awakening. During the anti-Suharto demonstrations, the members of Taring Padi joined the frontlines of public protests and advocated for the end of state violence and oppression. After the fall of Suharto in 1998, Taring Padi fused artistic production with education, socio-political and community engagement, often living alongside rural communities for long periods of time.

Today, the collective is renowned internationally for its woodcut posters, banners, cardboard puppets, murals, music, and political carnivals, and has inspired the birth of many other regional woodcut collectives.

In 2005, Djuwadi was invited to be a member of Taring Padi, and moved to Yogyakarta to immerse himself fully in their projects. He continued honing his artistic skills in painting, woodcut printing and performing arts.

Yogyakarta provided Djuwadi with the creative energy he craved; here, he embraced Taring Padi's DIY culture and their socially engaged process of educating and learning alongside local communities. Taring Padi identifies themselves as a part of the local community, never seeing their expertise in art as superior to the knowledge and skills of the locals.

Sharing this ethos, Djuwadi lived in Bali for two years with other Taring Padi members, focusing on permaculture and farming in the rural village of Pejeng. During this period, he studied *batik* techniques at the Puri Pejeng Batik studio founded by Pak Tjokorda Agung Pemayun, specialising in natural indigo dyes and other plant materials. The group explored contemporary designs using screen printing methods while collaborating with visiting Japanese *batik* artists who introduced them to new techniques, involving sticky glutinous rice instead of hot wax. Djuwadi's exposure to the craft of *batik* is evident in the intricate *isen-isen* patterns and background details of print works such as *Kembang Mengambang* (2009) and *Roso Sakjeroning Wening* (2011).



Rosok Sakjeroning Wening (2011),
original negative MDF board
print, 36.5cm x 28cm

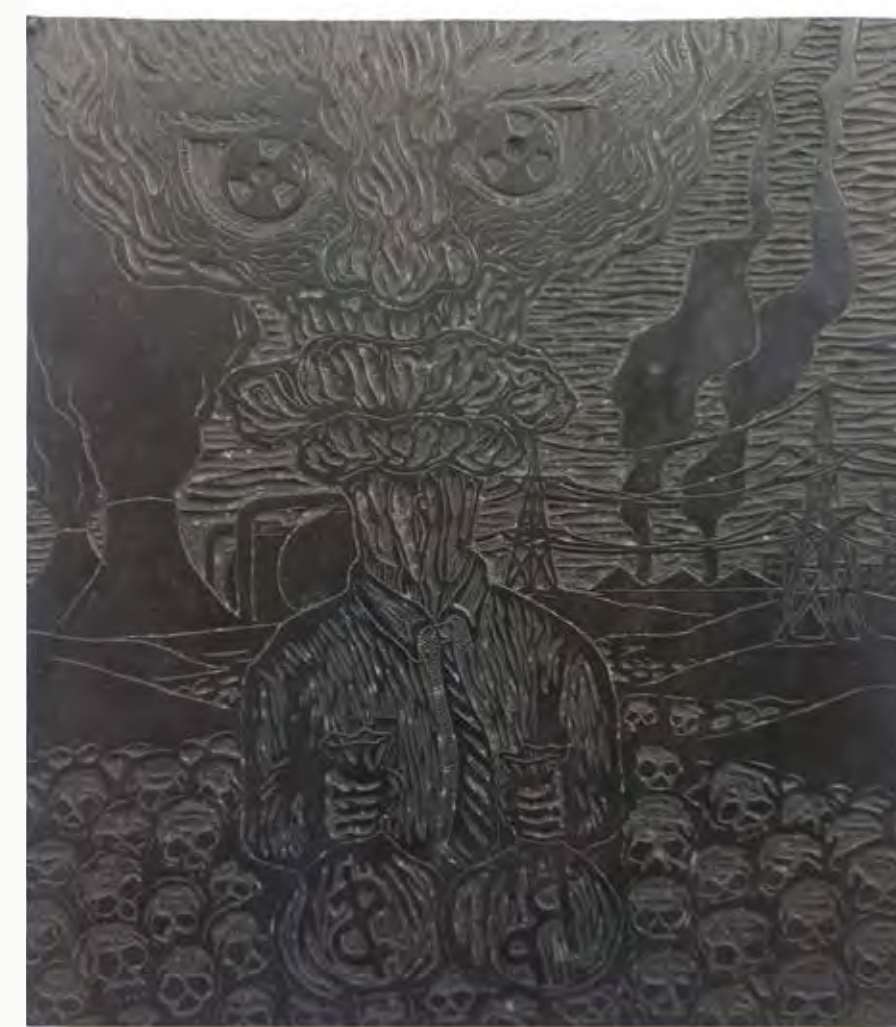
Kembang Mengambang (2009),
original negative MDF board
print, 24.5cm x 12cm



My friendship with Djuwadi began in 2015 during the programme TransActions in the Field (TATF) in Kuala Lumpur. A partnership between Lostgens', a contemporary art space for artists and activists, and the Goethe-Institut Malaysia, the programme explored socially engaged and participatory public art, citizen engagement, and the intersection of arts and local communities. During this exchange, I had the privilege to observe Djuwadi's sensitive engagement of the community in a local Malay kampung where he shared his

woodcut practice and led collaborative workshops. He showed us Taring Padi's large woodcut print on fabric, *All Mining is Dangerous* (2010), which centres on the 2006 Sidoarjo mudflow tragedy in East Java. The artwork depicts the deep drilling of natural gas in urban and industrial estates by PT Lapindo, one of Indonesia's largest private corporations, and their engineering miscalculation which led to the eruption of mud. The company's negligence and the incompetence of corrupt politicians caused deadly devastation to over 18 villages, their communities and the natural environment. Today, hot mud continues to erupt from the damage caused by the drilling. Embedded within the densely illustrated artwork are portraits of local people who bear the brunt of the extractions, standing in solidarity and resistance.

Stylistically, Taring Padi's visually graphic work is shaped by social realism, German expressionism and punk culture. We can observe similar influences on Djuwadi's early work as part of Taring Padi, such as *Deadly Agreement* (2006), which depicts the venomous face of corrupt businessmen and politicians who profit from the exploitation of natural resources.



Deadly Agreement (2006),
30cm x 26.5cm

Apart from working closely with Taring Padi, Djuwadi deepened his knowledge and cultural network through participating in other artist collectives and the annual Festival Mata Air (Festival of Water Springs), in Salatiga, Central Java, a grassroots event organised around water conservation and ecological awareness, from the first festival in 2006 to the last festival in 2016. In October 1998, he co-founded grassroots environmental organisation RAPALA (Randublatung Pecinta Alam), which brought together artists, organisers and local communities to advocate for land rehabilitation and forest conservation in his hometown. The self-organised group sought to make visible environmental issues caused by unregulated forest exploitation and looting, and collaborated with local government

and the forestry department to campaign for the environmental and ecological importance of forests. Djuwadi's involvement in this initiative included a long-term tree planting project that began in 1999. After fifteen years, the planted trees reached proper timber production size, and the villagers who participated in the project learned that they could invest in seedlings and plant them on their own land, so they can eventually use the mature trees as collateral for loans. The trees would come to benefit their families in the long-term, yielding 100 - 200 USD per teak or Mahogany tree, a significant sum for the villagers.

The group also worked with high schools to plant seeds, involving students and teachers in mapping village land areas that needed rehabilitation.

The seedlings matured over time, providing additional benefits to the community by protecting river banks and rice fields.

These cumulative experiences of growing up with and caring for the forest have ingrained in Djuwadi a profound love and commitment to nature. In his 2009 artwork *Terbanglah atau terbakar (Fly or Burn)*, Djuwadi mourns the plight of forests in Sumatra, Indonesia and the resulting toxic haze that engulfed Indonesia and the areas surrounding Straits of Malacca, Malaysia and Singapore. Slash and burn methods by large palm oil corporations or smallholder farmers to clear land for agriculture often spiral out of control during the dry season, damaging protected forest areas. In Djuwadi's fantasy world, the trees organise their own escape to freedom, leaping away from torched land, human greed and ignorance.



Terbanglah atau terbakar (Fly or Burn) (2009),
original negative MDF board print,
38cm x 24cm



His reverence for nature is also present in *Rain Generation* (2010). On a sunny afternoon in Dili, Timor-Leste, he observed the phenomenon of rain. Mesmerised by the visibility of water vapour rising from the open sea's heated surface, he reflected on rain's cyclical nature that redistributes fresh

Rain Generation (2010),
original negative MDF
board print, 45cm x 32cm

water across the planet and sustains life. These flowing

and connected bodies of water encompass our own watery bodies, bringing to mind Astrida Neimanis'

call for planetary hydrofeminism: we are all connected through shared ecological debt, vulnerability and responsibility. Consistent with his environmental ethos, Djuwadi frequently works with found and recycled objects. Some of the woodcut boards, including *Rain Generation*, were created using found material.

In 2009, Djuwadi experienced a period of immobility due to cerebral malaria in Timor-Leste. He needed much time to heal from brain fog, motor and sensory impairment. After slowly recovering from this vulnerable state, he became interested in how humans evolve physically and socially. He explored this concept in his recent series of prints, developed during his Ubah Rumah residency on Nikoi Island in 2023: "Our water today has heavy

metal, micro-plastics, and we are evolving with these changes, our bodies change. We evolve day by day: socially, politically and bodily. We have not left the animal kingdom.” Featuring the dugong, turtle, manta ray and pangolin, each print from the *Nikoi* series depicts humans as part animal and part plant, reflecting the ongoing evolution triggered by human acts. Listening to personal stories of the island shared by local staff, the artwork honours the sea-faring communities from the Riau Islands and highlights the interconnected nature of our ecosystem and the impact of human behaviours on the natural world.

Dugong and I (39cm x 28cm),
Turtle and I (39cm x 28cm),
Manta and I (38cm x 28cm),
Pangolin and I (39cm x 29cm),
Nikoi Series (2023)



Everyday Narratives

When embarking on personal work apart from the collective, Djuwadi's work focuses on his cultural roots, philosophical contemplations and everyday encounters, often inspired by local people he meets during his travels or places where he lives.

From 2011 to early 2013, he relocated to Papua New Guinea (PNG) with his wife Annie Sloman, who works as a programme manager for the non-profit organisation Oxfam. During this time he made works about local indigenous cultures and prevalent societal issues such as domestic violence, access to water and sanitation. He actively volunteered with the World Wildlife Fund for the 5th Sepik River Crocodile Festival in Ambunti and the Sepik River community.

In *Hakuak Boot Ba Mama (Big hug for Mama)* (2025), Djuwadi seems to suggest that the antidote to violence is love, through his tender portrayal of an embrace shared between the mother and child. Birthed from parents of distinct cultures, the child embodies his parents' shared journey in navigating cross-cultural communication and embracing each other's traditions. Framed by intricate traditional patterns drawn from *uma lulik*, a sacred totem house in Timor-Leste, and *tais*, a traditional woven fabric, the artwork carries traditional Javanese woodcarving floral patterns from Djuwadi's artisan background.



Hakuak Boot Ba Mama (Big hug for Mama) (2025),
90cm x 60cm

At times, the weight of social-political consciousness can be too much to bear for the artist. “I often question whether I’m doing enough for my family and environment. How can I connect my mind and sense with my cultural roots and community? It is important to me that we are critical and question ourselves about what we have done and what we will do next.” *Smart Scanner* (2022) is a reckoning with persuasive design and the addictive nature of modern technology, and the deceptive sense of control we believe we retain. In *Totem of Silence* (2015), Djuwadi reminds himself of the moral courage to speak out for the margins.



Smart Scanner (2022), 28cm x 18cm

Totem of Silence (2015),
original negative MDF board print,
61cm x 14cm



He reflects on the deafening silence and self-censorship when it comes to certain issues such as West Papua in Indonesia.

Djuwadi's works represent a twenty-year commitment to the art and social practice of woodcut printing and a compassionate engagement with the world. Living through intense cycles of political upheavals in his country, he belongs to a dynamic and contemporary Indonesian art tradition that is critically engaged with social processes and contemporary life through direct action and collective artmaking. Transitioning into midlife, his recent works are highly detailed and refined, taking on a more introspective tone. This journey of continuity and movement has always been more important

than the destination for Djuwadi, whose artwork embodies the lessons of life, interdependence and shared humanity, "Through my art practice, I build my own confidence, my life and my experience. I can't always say what I will do, but I am in the flow of nature."

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About the Artist

Djuwadi (b. 1974, Indonesia) is a self-taught artist from the Blora Regency in Central Java, Indonesia. He is known for his woodcut prints and his highly-skilled work in Javanese wood carving. His commitment to community-based arts has diversified his forms of expression across visual and



performance arts, and street art. He often takes on the role of a teaching artist in communities, focusing on environmental and social political issues.

Djuwadi began an informal apprenticeship in traditional Javanese woodcarving at age 15, learning from several master practitioners living in Randublatung. In 2005, he became a member of the renowned Yogyakarta-based art activist collective, Taring Padi, where his art reflected strong political and social activism. In both his personal work and his collaborative work with Taring Padi, Djuwadi seeks to raise awareness for human rights through the culture of sharing and exchange. Over the years, he has accumulated a rich and diverse experience, living and working collaboratively with communities and artists engaging in themes of nature and ecology.

As an independent artist and as a member of

Taring Padi, Djuwadi has participated in numerous exhibitions and festivals, and conducted workshops in Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, East Timor, Thailand, Papua New Guinea, Taiwan, England, USA, Germany, and Italy.

He is currently based in Dili, Timor-Leste.

About the Curators

ERNEST GOH

ernestgoh.com

Artist and photographer Ernest Goh's (b. 1979, Singapore) practice has been spent looking at the environment and its creatures, trying to understand the complex yet awe-inspiring interconnectivity between our planet and its inhabitants. Ernest founded Ayer Ayer—an ecologically-engaged initiative that reaches out to communities through

visual and participatory artworks to further environmental protection and awareness. He is also the co-artistic director of Ubah Rumah Art Residency, an artist residency and research outpost on Nikoi Island, Indonesia. Ayer Ayer's focus on ocean plastic in the regional waterways of Southeast Asia has led to the creation of public art, digital gamification and social intervention projects.

The artist also created The Animal Book Co., a photography-based project that explores unique natural histories. Ernest's animal portraits have been published in *The Fish Book* (2011), *COCKS* (2013, republished as *Chickens* in the US in 2015), and *The Gift Book* (2014). Ernest's work has been commissioned by and installed at the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, Singapore, collected by the

Multimedia Art Museum Moscow, and also resides in public and private collections.

Formerly a photojournalist, Ernest has documented Southeast Asia extensively including the Burmese refugee crisis on the Thai-Burmese border and the aftermath and recovery of the 2004 Tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia. He has photographed for Time Magazine Asia, Newsweek, Der Spiegel, Monocle and the Smithsonian.

Ernest is an awardee of the Ministry of Environment and Sustainability (Singapore) ECOFUND, and the National Environment Agency EcoFriend Award (2024). He also received the Discernment Award at the ICON de Martell Cordon Bleu Awards, Singapore (2012), the Sony World Photography Award (2013),

the Incentivising Innovation Fund by the Institute of Contemporary Arts London, the NESTA UK for its Cultural Leadership Program (2009) and the Philips Design Award (1999).

ALECIA NEO
alecianeoo.com

Alecia Neo (Singapore) is an artist and cultural worker. Her practice unfolds primarily through photography, video installations and participatory workshops that address modes of radical hospitality and care. Her recent projects include *Performing Normal* (2024 - 2025) at the Singapore Art Museum, *Performing Care* (2023) at Esplanade

Tunnel, *Scores for Caregiving* (2023), a participatory installation commissioned by ArtScience Museum, a site-specific art installation *Power to the People* (2022) at the Karachi Biennial. Conceived during the COVID-19 Pandemic, her long-term research, *Care Index*, seeks to understand care through dialogue, movement and collaborative practices. The project builds on an earlier collaborative artwork titled, *Between Earth and Sky* (2018), developed with a group of caregivers in Singapore. *Care Index* has been recently presented at MMCA Seoul, La Trobe Art Institute, The Listening Biennial, *Assembly for Permacircular Museums* (ZKM, Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe), *New Season of Care* (Asia-Art-Activism) and *Presence of Mind* (Gallery Lane Cove, NSW, Australia).

She is the co-artistic director of Ubah Rumah Art Residency on Nikoi Island and the co-founder of Brack, an art collective and platform for socially engaged art. Active since 2014, her ongoing collaborations with disabled individuals and communities manifest as an arts platform, Unseen Art Initiatives. Alecia has been an artist-in-residence at diverse art institutions such as New Taipei City Art Museum (Taiwan), Bamboo Curtain Studio (Taiwan), The Substation (Singapore), NTU CCA (Singapore) and UNIDEE in Biella, Italy.

She received the National Arts Council's Young Artist Award (2016) and the National Youth Award Singapore (2019). She is an Associate Artist at Dance Nucleus, Singapore and a member of the Green Art Lab Alliance (GALA) Asia.

About Blueprint Art Space

Blueprint Art Space is a venue for art events and exhibitions. It is managed by Blueprint Art Advisory, which aims to share enjoyable experiences with art and further creative dialogues through its projects, especially of Singapore contemporary art, presented alongside curators, galleries and art institutions.



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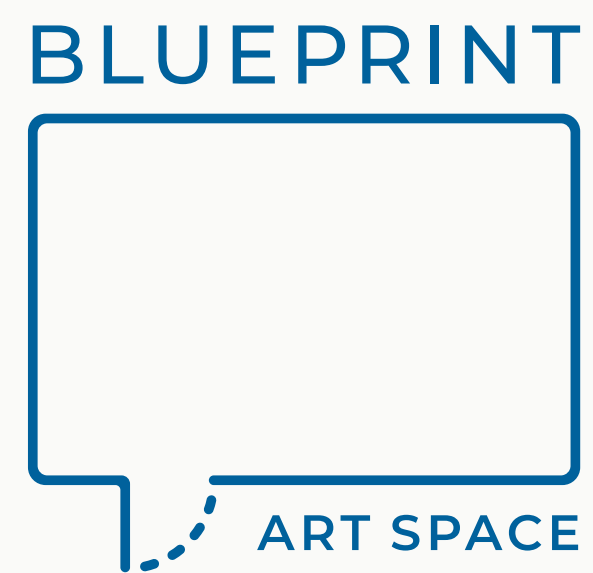


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