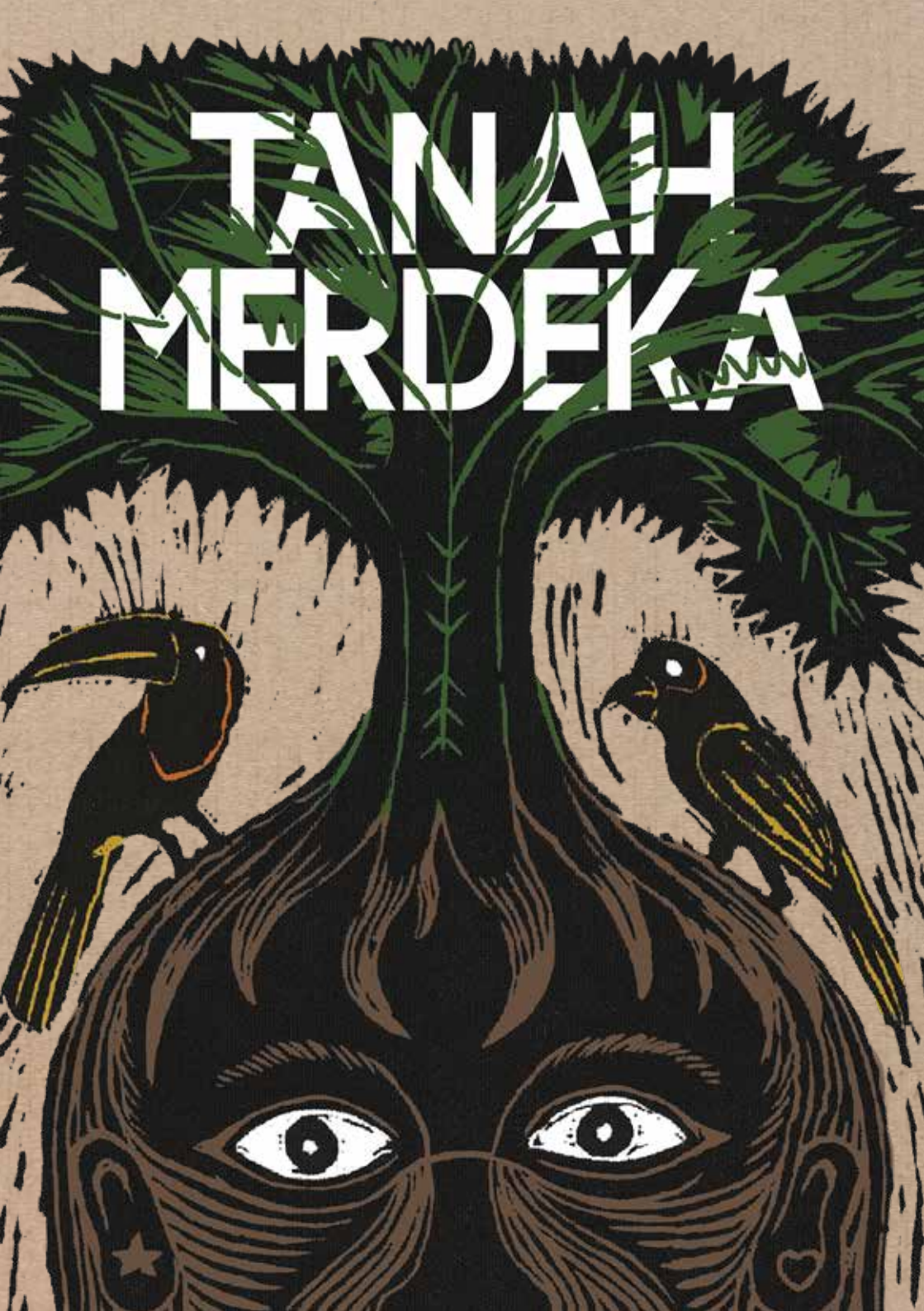
TANAH MERDEKA



FRAMER

EXHIBITION DATES

25 JUNE–
10 SEP ’23

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM

Not Native Native

EXHIBITION DESIGN

Kevin van Braak

TANAH MERDEKA

BY COLLECTIVE

Taring Padi

INTRODUCTION

Framer Framed is honoured to present *Tanah Merdeka* (2023) an exhibition by the Indonesian collective Taring Padi in partnership with Jewish Brazilian cultural centre *Casa do Povo* and *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST), the Brazilian landless workers' movement.

Drawing from the Indonesian expression 'tanah merdeka' (liberated land), the exhibition features large-scale banners, woodcut prints and cardboard puppets with a focus on land as the primary object of decolonial struggles. These works, stretched over more than two decades of the collective's practice since their foundation in 1998, are realised through methods of storytelling and co-creation with communities and activist groups around the world. From resource extraction and state violence to corporate exploitation towards the environment, Taring Padi's work manifests their vision of art as a political tool for social action. Their commitment and consistency in being part of ongoing struggles and changing relations through artistic work inspire us to embark on this journey to share and learn from their anti-colonial, collective practice.

Taring Padi emerged within a context of oppression and resistance, marking their collective work for a span of 25 years. The group has remained fluid in nature, with members joining and departing throughout the years. They have engaged directly with individuals and communities all around the world and employed a democratic methodology rather than demanding centralised control over their work. The collective consistently advocates for freedom and democracy while opposing the forces that impede them. Their vision embraces the aspiration for liberated land, the concept of *Tanah Merdeka*. Through this exhibition, Framer Framed endeavors to spark a dialogue about Taring Padi's practice and perseverance over the past decades, accomplished in collaboration with numerous local communities and marginalised groups.

Over the past years, Framer Framed has been invested in creating discursive events and exhibitions addressing Dutch colonialism and its legacy and how systems of oppression continue to affect living conditions of communities today. Framer Framed also wants to create avenues where marginalised histories can be told and seen from other perspectives. For example, with artist Kevin van Braak, we organised the exhibition *Pressing Matters* (2018), in which 24 artists from Indonesia - amongst them several Taring Padi members - were invited to address pressing socio-political issues in Indonesia. Curated by Sadiah Boonstra, *On the Nature of Botanical Gardens* (2020) examined the colonial operating structures in the classification of nature and its representations of botanical gardens through the works of nine contemporary Indonesian artists. In spring 2022, Framer Framed facilitated Taring Padi's *Wayang Kardus* workshop with local artists and participants and co-produced cardboard puppets that were later presented at documenta fifteen in Kassel, Germany. These efforts originated from a similar desire to not only *represent,* but *make liveable* - through artistic practice and collective work - a plurality of voices in a globalised society.

In response to the controversy surrounding the depiction of anti-semitic figures in one of Taring Padi's early works, *People's Justice* (2002), during documenta fifteen in Kassel, Germany, the artwork was removed from the public space. Taring Padi openly apologised for the figures that had sparked the controversy, stating:

"We deeply regret the extent to which the imagery of our work *People's Justice* has offended so many people." [1]

1. https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/news/statement-by-taring-padi-on-dismantling-peoples-justice/

The experience was particularly disconcerting for the collective, given their history and practice against forms of dictatorship, racism, and fascism. The complexity of the situation motivated us to continue the dialogue regarding how this incident occurred and the genuine intention behind the artwork. If the members of the collective express an intention contrary to what was perceived, it is essential to allow for a space of discussion. Such conversations have already taken place in numerous forms over the past year, both in person and online. Amongst the many meaningful things that developed from these

conversations was a collaborative project by Taring Padi, Casa do Povo, Landless Workers' Movement of Brazil (MST) and Framer Framed. This joint allyship started from collective learning sessions and site visits, and resulted in the creation of a new banner. The work, titled *Retomar Nossa Terra / Rebut Tanah Kita* (2023) - translated as 'Reclaiming the Land' - is an expression commonly used in both Brazil and Indonesia by many social movements. The creative process involved over ten individuals, including members from Taring Padi, MST, and their comrades. Through its rich imagery, the banner conveys the notion that land serves as a shared foundation for comprehending the causes and effects of colonialism and capitalist exploitation. Furthermore, it serves as a platform for resistance against various forms of injustice.

Our initial conversation with Casa do Povo and Taring Padi took place towards the end of documenta fifteen. During that time, Framer Framed organised the symposium *(un)Common Grounds: Reflecting on documenta fifteen* (2022), where participating artists, collectives, and individuals from diverse political backgrounds and disciplinary fields gathered to provide contextual understanding of the 100 days in Kassel, Germany. This symposium emphasised the importance of enabling open, equitable, and respectful conversations, as well as the significance of initiating a healing process through co-creation and collaboration. It taught us invaluable lessons on the power of open dialogue and collective healing, and the significance of maintaining a free space for encounter, experimentation and exchange.

Collaborating with Taring Padi, MST, and Casa do Povo has been a humble learning experience. In our preparations for this exhibition, we also reached out to friends both within and outside the Netherlands. These individuals generously shared their knowledge about various historical events and contexts, including the Second World War, the decolonisation process, Dutch aggression, the atrocities committed by the Suharto regime in Indonesia in 1965, as well as the ongoing situation in Papua New Guinea and the Moluccas.

Considering what happened at documenta fifteen, we believe it is crucial to engage in conversations with individuals, particularly from the Jewish community, who have been affected by the banner *People's Justice* shown in Kassel in 2022. We are therefore particularly grateful for the courageous and generous gestures of our colleagues at Casa do Povo, with whom we have been collaborating intensively for the past year.

We extend our gratitude and appreciation to all those who were willing to join us in this ongoing journey and look forward to creating new relations and bonds with you, through *Tanah Merdeka*.

FRAMER FRAMED TEAM



Partial installation view of Taring Padi's exhibition *Tanah Merdeka* (2023) at Framer Framed, Amsterdam. Photo by Maarten Nauw. Courtesy of Framer Framed

Taring Padi, Solidarity in Public Space

KERSTIN WINKING

One day this spring 2022, I joined the *Wayang Kardus Workshop* organized by the artist collective Taring Padi at Framer Framed art space in Amsterdam. Aside from making shadow puppets (*wayang*) with cardboard (*kardus*), the workshop entailed hanging out for hours with people from the neighborhood and the arts community while sharing conversation, food, and drinks, and enjoying live music. Taring Padi's home base is in Yogyakarta but members of the collective have been organizing a series of *Wayang Kardus Workshops* abroad, ahead of their participation at documenta fifteen in Kassel. Few participants at this happy gathering in Amsterdam would have initially guessed that the event is rooted in over two decades of radical political activism through art. Background knowledge was not required to participate in the workshop because Taring Padi's mission is to educate people about pacifist activism at all levels, with inclusion as a fundamental principle.

To give attendees some context, at the start of the workshop, historian Alexander Supartono introduced the practice of Taring Padi, who have utilized *wayang kardus* as a means of public resistance against state oppression since the group's formation in the mid-1990s, during the final years of Suharto's New Order regime (1968–1998) in Indonesia. The cardboard puppets are crucial to their mass actions, because they serve to, in Taring Padi's words:





Left and Right: A carnival with banners by Taring Padi remembering four years of the Lapindo Mud Tragedy in Siring Barat, Porong, Sidoarjo, East Java (2010). Courtesy of Art Asia Pacific and the Taring Padi artists

"voice protest and aspiration; 'double up' the number of participants; create lively ambience; protect from the heat of the sun," and "protect from the physical aggression of the securities personnel." This list of the *wayang kardus*'s functions testifies to the collective's lived experience of non-violent protest in volatile situations, such as Indonesia's *Reformasi* in 1998, the point at which Suharto's military dictatorship came to an end and the post-Suharto era began.

Before joining the workshop, I had read the article *Of pigs, puppets and protest* (2000) about Taring Padi, written by one of its early members, the scholar Heidi Arbuckle. She notes that the collective's protest wayang builds on the popularity of wayang theater performances in Java. However, in contrast to traditional wayang in which a puppeteer (*dalang*) voices all the puppets, in Taring Padi's performances, each puppet has its own voice. This polyphony mirrors the group's attachment to the principle of collectivity, which is important to them not only during protests but also organizationally. As Supartono told me, Taring Padi has existed for more than 20 years without

legal representation or a single director figure. Instead, they work with activity-based coordinators. Decisions are always made collectively even if that process sometimes causes controversy within the group. Trust is the glue that keeps them together regardless.

At one point during the workshop, I sat down with Hestu Setu Legi, another early member of Taring Padi, who is temporarily living in Berlin. We talked about the early years of the collective. "In the beginning," he said, "we all came together in the student movement, from different directions, but with the same feelings about the future and a dream to create something different with this movement in Indonesia. We felt we needed to build a culture and art organization." Between 20 to 30 early members gathered in the abandoned building of the Akademi Seni Rupa Indonesia (ASRI, Arts Academy of Indonesia), where they began squatting a few years before the fall of Suharto in 1998. Most of them were students at ASRI's successor, the Institut Seni Indonesia (Arts Institute of Indonesia), which had been relocated to a different neighborhood. Supartono reminded me that when Taring Padi got together, Indonesia

was still a highly policed state, where official gatherings were subject to state control. In this context, the social practice of *nongkrong* had subversive potential.

In a minimalist translation, the Indonesian word *nongkrong* means hanging or chilling out. It refers to a way of spending quality time together, drinking, smoking, and talking without any specific agenda. As an exchange of thoughts, *nongkrong* is an everyday activity for which people in Indonesia take time. *Nongkrong* can, but need not, lead to further action. In Taring Padi's case, it unleashed more than 20 years of grassroots engagement in the context of post-Suharto Indonesia and, occasionally, in international contexts. Initially, they directed their work against Suharto's military regime and militarism in general, but soon they were also protesting environmental pollution, racism, and discrimination; and advocating for gender equality, LGBTQ+ and women's rights, and the right to speak critically about religious intolerance or societal traumas such as the 1965 Indonesian genocide, when the Indonesian army and Western proxies killed suspected communists and ethnic minorities. All of these subjects are sensitive in Indonesia, even today, and the Taring Padi artists have experienced violence and aggression from fundamentalists as a result of broaching these topics.

The banner from 2005 with the slogan *Bongkar Tuntas Kejahatan Suharto 1965* (Completely Uncover Suharto's Crimes of 1965) is a good example of Taring Padi's collectively made protest paintings. In meticulous detail, it caricaturizes Suharto as a giant trampling over the masses while holding the *Supersemar* (Order of Eleventh March) agreement in his hand. In place of the giant general's genitals, his open trousers disclose an image of Sukarno under duress, with one of Suharto's soldiers holding a gun to his head, signing over control for the investigation of the 1965 violence and, in effect, handing over the state apparatus, to Suharto.

The group's radical collectivism is also reflected in the original name its members chose in 1998: *Lembaga Budaya Kerakyatan Taring Padi* (the Institute of People Oriented Culture of Taring Padi). Since then, younger generations have joined (and left) the collective. These younger people were critical of the collective's original name

and argued to change it to the less-formal-sounding *Kolektif Taring Padi* (the Community of Taring Padi). The different generations of Taring Padi have in common their active engagement with urban and rural communities, whether self-initiated or upon invitation. Core members like Hestu Setu Legi keep things ticking.

An example of the collective's activities was relayed to me by Fitri DK, an artist, sociologist, and second-generation Taring Padi member. In their 2010–2011 engagement with the village of Siring Barat in Porong, a district in East Java, Taring Padi protested alongside residents against the extraction of the area's natural gas by the Lapindo Brantas company. The drilling had disastrous consequences for villagers and the environment. In 2006, a blowout in a drilling well helped create a man-made 'volcano' that caused highly pressurized mud to rupture the surface, creating massive mudslides that buried people's houses and polluted the soil and nearby rivers with heavy metals. When Lapindo Brantas continued to deny responsibility, Taring Padi took action with the villagers.
I saw a banner produced for this protest in *Solidaritas tanpa Batas/ Solidarity without Boundaries*, Taring Padi's 2021 exhibition at Marketview Arts in York, Pennsylvania. The painted banner depicts the villagers standing like a wall in front of a landscape ravaged by a mudslide. Above them, the slogan reads *Adili Lapindo, Tuntaskan Gantirugi Korban Lumpur* (Bring Lapindo to Justice, Complete Compensation for Mud Victims). Taring Padi's photograph of the protest in Siring Barat shows the villagers and the collective carrying the same banner.

All of the exhibition's painted protest banners, vast number of woodcut prints, three cardboard puppets, as well as publications, archival exhibition brochures, newspaper cut-outs, and videos of protests in different public spaces originated from Taring Padi's nongkrong practice, which is often extended to include other communities, such as in the Porong district. The exhibition came about when Marketview director Matthew Clay-Robison hung out with members of the collective in Yogyakarta in 2018. They showed him a copy of *Taring Padi: Seni Membongkar Tirani* (Taring Padi: Art Smashing Tyranny), a comprehensive monograph that was published in 2011. In addition to excellent articles about Taring Padi, the publication contains reproductions of the visual works



they have co-produced and collected over the years. The book became the conceptual backbone for the exhibition at Marketview, which featured impressive banners such as the three-meter-by-three-meter *Bumi Manusia* (2020). Named after writer Pramoedya Ananta Toer's tragic love story set in the oppressive time of the Dutch colonization of Indonesia, the image depicts a half-man, half-woman figure breaking free from chains that extend from an industrialized, militarized, and inequitable environment.

Fitri DK told me that in public spaces, specifically in Indonesia but also elsewhere, Taring Padi artists often appear conspicuous because of their colorful clothes and tattoos. That is why they take time to gain people's trust through nongkrong in all their projects. For example, when they arrived in the village in Porong, they set up camp close to the village. After a while, the children became curious and made contact. They taught the children songs and after a while the parents came to check on them and hung around. Usually, this is how nongkrong starts in the villages. Then, over the course of a few days, they organized a protest in collaboration with the villagers.

Partial installation view of Taring Padi's *Solidaritas Tanpa Batas/Solidarity Without Boundaries* (2021) at Marketview Arts, York. Photo by Gregory Staley. Courtesy of York College Galleries



Partial installation view of Taring Padi's exhibition *Tanah Merdeka* (2023) at Framer Framed, Amsterdam. Photo by Maarten Nauw. Courtesy of Framer Framed

Tekst: Kerstin Winking
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Since *nongkrong* is such a popular practice in Indonesia, other artist collectives that came about in the post-Suharto era, such as ruangrupa, also swear by *nongkrong*. As the artistic directors of documenta fifteen, ruangrupa established ruruHaus in the center of Kassel as a site for nongkrong years ahead of the event.

Unfortunately, in the past two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted in-person nongkrong processes significantly. But in 2022, Taring Padi expects to continue to nongkrong and organize a *Wayang Kardus Workshop* at documenta fifteen in Kassel. What kinds of protest will result remain to be seen.



Members of Taring Padi and MST standing in front of the banner *Retomar Nossa Terra / Rebut Tanah Kita* (2023) at Florestan Flores National School in Brazil, April 2023. Photo: Taring Padi

Co-creating in Political Solidarity: MST and Taring Padi on the making of *Retomar Nossa Terra / Rebut Tanah Kita*

DEWI LAURENTE
FRAMER FRAMED

As part of their residency co-organised by Framer Framed and Jewish Brazilian cultural centre Casa do Povo, Taring Padi embarked on their rural experience by visiting the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) alongside the Artistic Brigade, a group of artists working in the cultural wing of the MST. This visit allowed the group to observe and participate in the difficult struggle to maintain land occupation - a familiar experience for the collective, given their long history of solidarity with land occupations throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Their engagement extended not only to the human inhabitants of the camp but also to the non-human residents, as they learned about and from the rich biodiversity of Brazil. It was during this time that the participants began to unravel the long list of their contextual similarities encompassing political and ecological aspects.

Their work took them to the Florestan Flores National School, an MST school situated in the Brazilian countryside. Here, Taring Padi and MST identified historical and contemporary parallels in their colonial and postcolonial trajectories. They facilitated classes to exchange knowledge about their respective histories, which laid the foundation for the creation of new artworks. They began thinking of the symbols, stories, and figures that could best represent the unity and the particularities of their own worlds.



Taring Padi visiting and learning from the MST. Photo: Carla Loop

This collaborative and knowledge-sharing process culminated in the creation of *Retomar Nossa Terra/ Rebut Tanah Kita*, an artistic dedication to the human and non-human interactions they encountered while visiting different locations in Brazil together. The co-creation process was vibrant and lively, characterised by acts of solidarity full of laughter, music, and art. *Retomar Nossa Terra/ Rebut Tanah Kita* serves as a testament to the colourful and dynamic nature of their interactions, as well as the collective spirit of Taring Padi. The banner came to life through the contributions of the Artistic Brigade, Taring Padi members, visitors, students, and anyone drawn to join the group, engaging in conversations, jokes, and playful activities. While remaining sharply critical of oppressive systems, from colonialism to modern-day agro-industry, the group primarily communicated through humour, keeping the revolutionary spirit alive through joy.

This co-created banner functions not only as a form of socialist agitation but also as a piece that confronts the contradictions of the struggle against imperialist, neo-colonial, and capitalist societies. They acknowledged



Taring Padi's *Wayang Kardus* workshop at Casa do Povo (Brazil, São Paulo) in April, 2023. Photo: Ana Druwe

the necessity for workers to continue operating within industrial systems and recognised the urban-rural divide. Nevertheless, the banner emphasises that we exist in unity. The process also revealed the contradictions stemming from colonial legacies and attitudes towards land. The very land that sustains us as humans is also the land we exploit, pollute, and forcibly deny access to. This residency explored the plurality of interpretations behind 'reclaiming the land' and how different groups contribute to the democratisation of this vital resource throughout various strata of society. Through art, humour, and political education, the project documented resistance against all forms of oppression, unified under the concept of *Tanah Merdeka*.

This summary is based on a conversation between members of MST and Taring Padi on 19 April, 2023



Taring Padi's *Wayang Kardus* workshop at Casa do Povo (Brazil, São Paulo) April, 2023
Photo: Ana Druwe

TANAH MERDEKA

ALEXANDER
SUPARTONO
TARING PADI

In 2011, Taring Padi published the book *Art Smashing Tyranny*. The publication recorded and contextualised the collective's politically engaged practice against the ills of militarism and neoliberalism and its social commitment to gender equality, the rights of workers and peasants, and environmental justice. Thirteen years on, the work showcased in the 25th-anniversary exhibition *Tanah Merdeka* (Liberated Land/Space) addresses the same issues. We continue to fight for "openness, social prosperity, the sovereignty of the people, justice among generations, democracy, human rights, gender perspectives, the reformation of global relations, and the preservation of the environment" (Taring Padi, *Manifesto*, 1998).

In December 1998, Taring Padi was established in the office of the Indonesian Legal Aid Foundation (YLBHI) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, which was the operational hub where activists gathered to organise demonstrations and press conferences or seek help for friends who were detained during the Suharto dictatorship. This activist ecosystem still supports Taring Padi's radical art practice. It also enables new members to grow in an atmosphere where art and the praxis of life are interconnected, thus securing Taring Padi's inclusive and non-hierarchical organisational structure.

With equity, diversity, and openness being paramount values, the collective embraces old and new members from different backgrounds and age groups whose multiperspectivism not only feeds and renews Taring Padi's radical art practice, but also prevents the development of any form of exclusivity. Such an attitude is reflected in the change of the collective's official name from 'Lembaga Budaya Kerakyatan/LBK Taring Padi' / The Institute of People Oriented Culture of Taring Padi to 'Kolektif Pekerja Seni Taring Padi' / The Collective of Art Workers Taring Padi. The former prescribed an orthodox, old-school left organisation, which required a rigid organisational discipline.

The latter reflects the evolvement of the collective's connective principle, which merges ideology and camaraderie in utilising art and activism as tools for political action and education. There is no guidance on how individual styles may be applied to collective works. There is only shared understanding and respect for Taring Padi's identity, character, and mission. Artistic matters are addressed in an 'organic' manner: once the topic, theme, approach, general compositional structure, and text are agreed upon, the execution rests, *carte blanche*, upon the hands of individual members, who may often invite their friends and acquaintances to participate. Visual details are born out of creative dialogue, debates, or banter while working in situ. This process exemplifies Taring Padi's principle of learning and working together.

Political art is often considered a reflection of social relations. In volatile social situations, where violence, exploitation, and censorship are part of daily reality, art practice tends to depart from traditional values and canons; it becomes part of history in the making, actively affecting societal change. The radicalisation of Taring Padi's artistic practice was part and parcel of social and political upheavals in Indonesia in 1998 that brought down the 32-year-long military dictatorship of Suharto. Taring Padi produced woodcut posters, cardboard puppets, and large-scale banners for street protests, which became political tools in its involvement in the 1998 Indonesian popular movement.

With the restoration of democracy in Indonesia, many Taring Padi members left the street to return to their academic studies or launch individual artistic careers. However, the collective has retained its radicalism, its anti-capitalist and anti-establishment ethos. This is the reason why large art institutions and related events have not been Taring Padi's preferred channels for the dissemination of collective work. Yet, its measured involvement with the international art circuit has enabled Taring Padi to engage with local and global struggles for socio-political changes. In 2022, Taring Padi participated in the National Congress of the Indonesian Alliance of Indigenous Communities, in the context of which a series of murals was created in the Sentani market in West Papua. In the same year, Taring Padi members joined peasants in Banyuwangi, East Java, in their fight to defend their land against corporate exploitation. Activities such as these illustrate how Taring Padi's artistic practice does not just function as a mirror

reflecting social relations but becomes an organic part of these relations.

The invitation to participate in documenta fifteen in Kassel, Germany in 2022 seemed like an excellent opportunity to contribute to one of the most renowned art events and bring visibility to the solidarity work of Taring Padi. The extensive exhibition of woodcuts, drawings, paintings, collectively produced banners, cardboard puppets, and pamphlets at Hallenbad Ost specifically referenced the struggles of social movements in the 'Global South' against dictatorships, corruption, and capitalist systems. The depiction of antisemitic figures in the mural *People's Justice* (2002), one of Taring Padi's early works created as a critique of Western democracies supporting the oppressive Suharto regime, deeply hurt many people. We deeply regret the pain caused by this iconography and continue to apologise.

To commence the restorative process, Framer Framed and Taring Padi approached the Jewish progressive art space Casa do Povo in São Paolo, Brazil. With their help, a collaborative network has been established, including Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement and the Brazilian branch of the Tricontinental Institute for Social Research. The aim of this alliance is to gain a deeper transnational understanding of cultural and historical specificities in raising public awareness about the colonial legacies behind state authoritarianism, land division and violence and to produce collective new work.

Starting in 2022, this collaborative work, facilitated by the Amsterdam art space Framer Framed, materialises the lumbung principle of solidarity work, mutual knowledge exchange, and sharing of resources. Such a proposition is set in motion in the *Tanah Merdeka* exhibition, to which individuals, communities, and collectives of Moluccan, Papuan, Indonesian, and Indonesian-Jewish backgrounds will actively contribute by co-creating new works. The nature and vision of Framer Framed provide a unique cultural platform that supports the political activism and collectivism of Taring Padi's work. Towards these ends, the exhibition concept recreates Taring Padi's inclusive habitus as a *Tanah Merdeka*, a liberated land where all are welcome to participate and find their voice.

Seeking Restorative Processes

BENJAMIN SEROUSSI
CASA DO POVO

Many asked us: why would Casa do Povo, a Jewish institution, invite an Indonesian collective that was accused of antisemitism during documenta fifteen for an artistic residency? We typically respond to this question with another one: who better than a Jewish Institution to do this? In this particular instance, it is not just any Jewish institution, as Casa do Povo had already been working with the artistic team of documenta fifteen prior to the event's opening. In fact, Taring Padi paved the way for our invitation to happen. Their apologies and almost immediate taking down of the panel *People's Justice* with antisemitic figures was a clear acknowledgement of what had transpired. It was enough for us to engage with them in a restorative conversation about antisemitism and other issues. Framer Framed offered the perfect context - the production of a new work - and financial conditions to make it all possible.

As a place that works with contemporary art, Casa do Povo couldn't limit itself to a distant critical analysis of the images produced during documenta fifteen; it needed to meet with the artists who had produced these images. The fight against antisemitism, racism, transphobia and many other forms of oppressions cannot be done solely through denunciations and cancellations. It is fundamental to seek out restorative processes as well. We know such dynamics are often lengthy (and sometimes frustrating), but they are also catalysts for transformation. Few people will openly declare themselves as antisemites or racists, but that doesn't mean they cannot behave as such. None of us is entirely free from prejudice. Therefore, it is more important to focus on understanding how antisemitism operates, its impact, and how to combat it, rather than merely identifying individuals who are perceived as holding prejudiced beliefs. Additionally, one must also be aware of the instrumentalisation of this struggle by conservative agendas - as it has happened in documenta fifteen when the rightful stand against antisemitism was used to silence many artists and the exhibition as a whole.

The time we spent in Brazil with Taring Padi was fruitful. The residency functioned as a safe zone where we had the chance to engage in friendly conversations about delicate issues such as antisemitism and its history, the differences between the nation state of Israel and diasporic Judaism, the Suharto dictatorship, colonialism, and the common struggles for land in Brazil and Indonesia. All this was done as Taring Padi was working and hanging out - what documenta fifteen called "nongkrong" - with MST members. One year later, we do not think that all the issues have ben resolved, but we bonded, formed connections and somehow managed to move forward together.

The art world should not be reduced to be an endless series of shallow celebrations. sufficient time should be given to open-ended initiatives such as this residency. Cultural gaps, language misunderstandings, and idiosyncratic histories are part of our reality. It is always painful when someone initially doesn't grasp what you are trying to say or when your pain is just not acknowledged. However, in a globalized and often dully homogenized world, such challenging encounters (and misencounters) also serve as a sign that there are still many radically different worlds out there. As we reflect on this experience, we hope it can help tackle other connected struggles with greater empathy in order to go deeper into discussions about the production and reception of art, the representation of the other, and the fight against all forms of oppressions.



Woodcut print workshop at Florestan Flores National School in Brazil, April 2023 | Photo: Taring Padi

BIOS

Taring Padi was founded in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 1998 by a group of progressive art students and activists in response to the Indonesian socio-political upheavals during the reformation era. Consequently, Taring Padi's artistic practice is always part of and contextualises within socio-political and cultural action and solidarity with a wide range of communities and social groups. Taring Padi's works and solidarity actions are manifested in collective works in the form of woodcut posters, large-size banners, rontek, cardboard puppets, music, carnival and other art actions.

In the summer of 2022, Taring Padi participated in *documenta fifteen* and presented 1.000 cardboard puppets made by citizens who took part in the *Wayang Kardus* workshops at Framer Framed and other locations.

Casa do Povo is a cultural centre that revisits and reinvents notions of culture, community and memory. It was founded and is still run by the progressive Jewish community in São Paulo, Brazil. Opened in 1953, it established itself as a living monument to the memory of the millions of Jews murdered during the Second World War. Casa do Povo's neighbourhood, Bom Retiro has historically received different waves of immigrant groups, including Greeks, Koreans, and Bolivians, among others – and they are all active and welcome participants in the house's activities.

In Casa do Povo, memory serves as a basis for the imagination and construction of a better future based on tolerance, diversity, human rights, and redistribution.



Taring Padi, *People's Justice No 3*, constructed on site | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

WORKS



Wayang Kardus | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

Wayang Kardus (1998-2022)
Cardboard Puppets

Acrylic on cardboard
Variable dimensions

Storytelling through puppetry is a long-standing tradition in Indonesian culture. Taring Padi uses cardboard puppets as a practical and interactive medium to support activist groups within their struggles for social justice in their communities. Essentially, Taring Padi is deconstructing the highbrow art form of the Indonesian shadow puppetry to a grassroots level and bringing its communicative and entertainment qualities to street activism. During street demonstrations and other public actions, cardboard puppets serve to express protests and demands, increase the number of participants, add vibrancy and movement, provide protection from the elements, and act as a barrier against physical aggression.

The 'banner' of cardboard puppets was designed by members of the Taring Padi collective here in the Framer Framed space. It shows all of the puppets which were placed in Friederichplatz during *documenta fifteen* in Kassel, Germany. It is a compilation of the many people and communities that Taring Padi has taught

and has learned from, documenting their learning process from everyday people and their struggles. It shows how many people have come together to fight for justice throughout the years they have worked, and the impact their stories have had on the collective's idea and understanding of what the struggle for justice should look like. Contrasting this cardboard puppet banner to their first banners, the evolution of their co-creation practice is clear — while they first endeavored to serve the people as activists and through political demonstrations, the people have now become an inseparable part of Taring Padi, collective agenda setting and their trajectory into the future.

—

Ibu Bumi (2014)
Land, Water, Earth, Call Me Mother

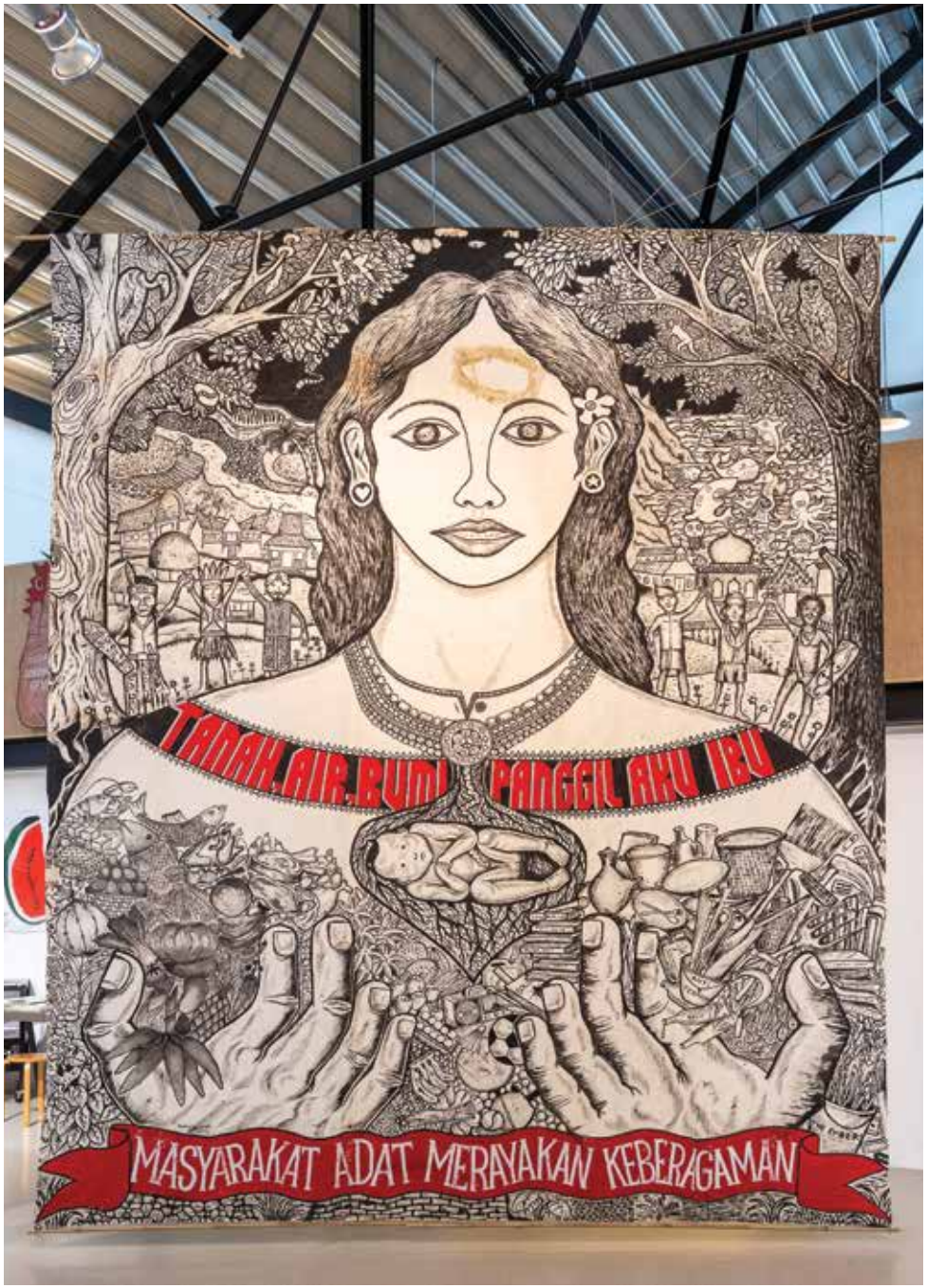
Acrylic on canvas
480 x 575 cm

The banner was created in 2014 for the National congress of the Indonesian Alliance of Indigenous People, with whom Taring Padi collaborates on a regular basis. It is frequently utilised in various social and political events, especially those related to environmental struggles.

Taring Padi was contacted by the National Congress of the Indonesian Alliance of Indigenous Communities more than a decade ago, and from then on they maintained a long standing relationship. For the collective, it was crucial to deepen their understanding of climate justice and the impacts of resource extraction from those most affected by the encroachment of multinational corporations and local oligarchies.

Here in this banner, the indigenous people of the archipelago are depicted behind the woman in the smaller figures and their traditional homes. These are (from left to right) Orang Dayak (Kalimantan), Papua (Papua Barat), Jawa (Java), Toraja (Sulawesi). The figure of the woman is the manifestation of Mother Earth, as the banner on her chest reads 'Land, Water, Earth, They Call Me Mother'. In many indigenous knowledge systems, the Earth is embodied by a woman. This banner represents this notion, but goes further to include a feminist perspective on the question of labour. If the Earth is depicted as a mother, then the role of the mother must also be examined.

The bottom half of the banner consists of fruits, vegetables, and other produce (left) and household items (right). These are to signify the (domestic) labour taken on by women and mothers, as well as the laborious work of Mother Earth to create the various beings existing alongside us. These types of labour are often viewed as inherent to the existence of a woman, but this banner contradicts this assumption by showing that these types of labour



Ibu Bumi | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed



Retomar Nossa Terra | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

must be acknowledged, understood, and advocated for in the same way as the labour of the working people.

—

Retomar Nossa Terra / Rebut Tanah Kita **(2023)**
Reclaim the Land

Acrylic on canvas
480 x 600 cm

The banner symbolizes the shared struggle against neo-liberal agro-industry in the Global South, represented by its signatories: Taring Padi from Indonesia, Casa do Povo and MST from Brazil. At its centre stands Samaúma, the mother tree of the Amazon, symbolizing the need to protect Mother Earth. A ribbon with the Portuguese inscription "Retomar Nossa Terra" (Reclaim the Land) further emphasizes this message. Snaking at the feet of the marching militants is the Indonesian translation, 'Rebut Tanah Kita'. Among the activists depicted are well-known figures from the Brazilian struggle against oppressive power, including women, LGBT activists, favelada activist Marielle Franco, Jewish communist Olga Benário, landless martyr Seu Luis, and Amazon tribal chief Raoni Metuktire. They stand alongside their Indonesian comrades, left novelist Pramoedya Ananta Toer and peasant movement leader Samin Surontiko. They march together, as a symbol of the post-war non-aligned movement, revived through the collaboration of Taring Padi, Casa do Povo, and MST.

Similar to other works of Taring Padi, the banner aims to celebrate the resilience of the people fighting for their land by depicting a collective march. At the same time, we see animals and plants alongside the people, whose livelihoods cannot be separated from the human struggle. What cannot be missed is the mother tree (centre), representing the biodiversity in Brazil and Indonesia in preservation efforts and returning colonised stolen land. On the right side of the mother tree depicts the monument created in memory of the Eldorado do Carajás massacre, where landless farmers were killed by the millitary police in 1996.

There are also important figures from both locales, who represent their guardianship over the land and their community. Specifically agreed amongst the participants to be depicted is activist and environmentalist Raoni Metuktire (b.1932-) (lower centre), a living symbol of the fight for the preservation of the Amazon rainforest and indigenous culture. In front of him stands revolutionary Indonesian author Pramoedya Ananta Toer (1925-2006), a founding member of socialist art organisation Lekra and a key figure in the anticolonial movement in Indonesia. Next to him is German-born Jewish Brazilian activist Olga Benario Prestes (1908-1942) (centre left), an important female member of the communist party in Germany. Sent to Brazil by the Soviet Union to help the insurrection, Olga married Prestes (one of the most important political figures in Brazil) and was eventually arrested, brought back to Germany and killed in the concentration camp in 1942.

While the participants decided to highlight important historical figures, the march also represents the society as a whole, from indigenous people, activists, farmers, factory workers, to the wildlife and nature that sustains and holds us together. The banner also introduces the contradictions that exist within a struggle — for example people (right) painted in grey shades having to work for extractive companies to earn a living despite being part of the MST movement.

The right side of the banner represents capitalist greed and the control of agro-industry and other extractive industries. The octopus-shaped machine (upper right) represents imperialism and the capitalist system spreading their tentacles in all directions and ‘choking’ the land with a tight grip. Nearby is the capitalist cow dressed in a suit representing the capitalist industrial exploitation of land. The pose of the cow depicts the hand gesture commonly used by the former



The Evolution of Colonial Violence | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

extreme right president Jair Bolsonaro. In Brazil, the followers of the extreme right were often symbolised as cows because of their blind way of following Jair Bolsonaro's leadership, associated with the killing of many indigenous people and the exploitation of land with agro-businesses. All of these is diminished by the power and unity of the people and their more-than-human comrades. During the conversation with Taring Padi, members stated: "Land equalises all of us: we live on the land, we come from the land, it feeds us and it keeps us alive". This banner exemplifies that there is a great need for talking about land struggles and promoting new forms of relationship with land, based on mutuality and reciprocity.

—

Evolusi Kekerasan Kolonial (2023)
The Evolution of Colonial Violence

Acrylic on canvas
480 x 600 cm

This new banner is created specifically for this exhibition and as part of the ongoing collaboration between Framer Framed, Casa do Povo, and Taring Padi. The banner was conceptualised alongside migrant communities in the Netherlands with a focus on the theme of colonial violence, and the experiences that coloniality has historically marginalised. It highlights the violent legacies of the Dutch colonial era, particularly those experienced by different migrant communities from former and current colonies. On the left-hand side, the banner traces the lineage of contemporary militarism and violence to the militarist rule of the colonial administration. It depicts the migrant experience with the two separated figures (bottom centre) and the ships (centre) representing the hundreds of thousands who have left their home countries. These migrants leave for many reasons, but are then separated from their cultures and experience vicious coloniality in the Netherlands, such as the systematic erasure of their struggles and the glorification of their oppressors.

The right-hand side imagines a joyous and peaceful life beyond the violence perpetuated by colonial legacies, referencing the Bandung Conference of 1955 (top right) as one attempt to unite the (formerly) colonised. It encourages (formerly) colonised people to learn from one another, whether they are part of a diaspora or remain in their home country, to oust the continued rule of colonialism over their land, their bodies, and their minds. The collective aims to explore further as they develop the design alongside more groups from the former and current colonies throughout this exhibit. It is possible that you will see this banner change and take new forms as the exhibition progresses, with input from visitors and participants in future programming, which is the very nature of a Taring Padi project.

We invite you to join us to complete the banner later this summer 2023. More information will follow on our website and our social media channels.

—

Tenda Pecel Lele (2005)
Everyone is Entitled to a Decent Livelihood

Acrylic on canvas
575 x 480 cm

The banner mimics the facade of a city street food vendor, a popular gathering spot where people come together to eat and converse. It vividly portrays the hustle and bustle of urban life, particularly for those in the lower socioeconomic class. Additionally, the banner showcases street protests organized by urban poor communities advocating for job equality and opposing privatization.

The banner's chaos mirrors the political chaos at the time (2005), with many upheavals following the 1997 economic crisis and the transition from authoritarian government to a promised democracy post 1998. The struggle embodied in the banner is the increase in the cost of living. As a part of the rush to adopt neo-liberal economic policies, the government



Tenda Pecel Lele | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

welcomed the privatisation of different sectors including public utilities such as water. These interventions were often in cooperation with foreign interests and local oligarchs (top right), which in turn put money in the hands of the middle classes and encouraged over-consumption (bottom right). While this may read as prosperity, this is without the consideration of the lives of urban poor workers, who struggled to keep up with the rising costs and found themselves priced out of urban areas despite needing to remain there for their work and livelihoods. One can see the gathering of the disenfranchised and their protest (left), against the capitalist reactions to global demands of democratization and an open and free market. The protest signs on the left side are decrying the privitatisation of basic needs, demanding an end to the eviction of urban poor populations and the recognition of their right to security and equal access to livelihood. Following these protests, the privatisation of water access was deemed illegal by an Indonesian court in 2015 on the basis of neglect from private holders, and returned to public control.



Mereka Yang Bertanggung Jawab | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

Mereka Yang Bertanggung Jawab (2000)
Those Who Are Responsible

Acrylic on canvas
300 x 300 cm

These two banners were created in the early days of the collective, when they were very active in the demonstrations to topple the dictator Soeharto. The oldest banner is the very first banner created by a member of the collective, as a demonstration banner. It was created by then president of Taring Padi, Yustoni Volunteero. It depicts a mass grave and decries state violence against the oppressed classes, and a



Adili Soeharto dan Para Jenderalnya | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed



Hak Asasi Manusia | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

protest against certain issues with political nepotism and cronyism at the time. It is the inspiration for the banners that follow, as the collective noted their effectiveness in agitation, education, and organisation of the people.

—

Adili Soeharto dan Para Jenderalnya (2000)
Bring Soeharto and His Generals to Trial

Acrylic on canvas
300 x 300 cm

The other banner continues the struggle against the Soeharto regime (he is pictured as the large figure on the left). It was created the year after he was ousted as a protest against his protection by the military and by many of his cronies. His appointees in local and federal governments remained in their positions, especially within the military (the figures tied around him). It protests the lack of systematic changes following the regime's downfall as a result of the legacies of Soeharto remaining in power and remaining the political norm. These banners mark the beginning of the collective banner making for Taring Padi, a tradition which continues to this day as a means of political art making.

Hak Asasi Manusia (2012)
Human Rights

Acrylic on canvas
300 x 300 cm

The banner appropriates the Tugu Selamat Datang (Welcome Monument) located in central Jakarta. Since the 1998 *Reformasi*, this monument has become a significant site for various political actions, including the celebration of Human Rights Day. Unlike many of Taring Padi's banners, this particular one focuses solely on the protagonist figures: people engaging in a street carnival to commemorate Human Rights Day. These individuals carry Taring Padi's distinctive attributes for demonstrations, including cardboard puppets.

The statue was built in 1961 under the rule of Soekarno, and originally commissioned for the sixth Asian Games. The imagery of the couple holding hands and welcoming guests to the country is heavily derived from socialist realism, a movement introducing the principle of politicising culture and art to serve a societal purpose. The statue became the site of many historical protests, both brutal and non-violent.

This banner shows the monument's political and social history, as a work of public art that has united people since its establishment. It celebrates the many demonstrations fighting against imperialist and capitalist injustices through a large march, with many signs announcing the calls to action that Taring Padi has participated in throughout the years. These signs call for the respect of the land, respect towards religious minorities, and a general strive for peace. Some of them decry the imperialist system and its impacts on nature and people alike (centre), as well as the violence of state bodies such as the police (right).

The many groups that Taring Padi has worked with since their inception are present in the march, with their arms and signs raised towards the sky like the figures from the *Tugu Selamat Datang* (front). Throughout the crowd, one can find indigenous people, workers, farmers, religious people, domestic workers, and all those that constitute the oppressed classes in Indonesia and beyond. Looking to the future, they are united by the struggle for their rights, and are memorialised in their solidarity.

***Bumi Manusia* (2021)**
The Earth of Mankind

Acrylic on canvas
300 x 300 cm

The title of this banner is derived from the first novels of the *Buru Tetralogy* by Pramoedya Ananta Toer, an Indonesian writer whose work has greatly influenced Taring Padi. The central figure in the banner appropriates the Liberation of West Papua monument, which commemorates the transfer of Western New Guinea from the Netherlands to Indonesia in 1963. Through references to Freeport mines and palm oil agroindustry, the banner vividly expresses the continuous injustices, discrimination, exploitation, and violence faced by the majority of the population as a result of the impoverishing effects of capital. This banner is part of the same series as *Hak Asasi Manusia*, further exploring the many socialist realism style statues commissioned by the Soekarno administration in the 1960s and their relation to human rights. The central figure is inspired by the monument Patung Pembebasan Irian Barat, representing the Papuan people in their struggle for freedom. It is a monument to the decolonisation of Netherlands New Guinea in the 1960s and the transfer of their sovereignty to the Indonesian state.

However, in this banner the collective confronts the abuses of the West Papuan territory as a result of this false autonomy, many of which are rooted



Bumi Manusia | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

in the introduction of multinational capitalist interest through the signing of the PT. Freeport contract by Soeharto (left) in 1967. The Freeport mine (bottom) is a common symbol throughout the works of Taring Padi as it is symbolic of the destruction of land throughout the archipelago for the extraction of resources such as gold, oil, palm oil, rubber, and coal. The contract led to the destruction and militarisation of Papuan land and the violation of their rights to their own resources and indigenous practices. The Papuan people have been subjected to brutal military and state violence since the 1960s, all in the pursuit of their natural wealth by the local oligarchy and international corporate stakeholders from the UK, US, and Australia.

This banner also depicts the cultural heritage of Papua, such as the craftsmanship (left and right totems) and traditions (such as the noken bags behind the figure) typical to the region. These cultural themes demand respect for Papuan existences beyond an extractive and capitalist view — to instead view West Papua and its inhabitants as they are.



Tanah dan Petani Merdeka | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

Tanah dan Petani Merdeka Menghidupi Semua
Farmers Give Life to All (2021)

Woodcut print on fabric
122 x 242 cm

These two banners are the first linocut prints created by Taring Padi in a collective manner, similar to how they work for the large-scale banners. During the process, they discuss the steadfast socialist theme of solidarity with and within farmer and worker communities. *Tanah dan Petani Merdeka Menghidupi Semua* (Farmers Give Life to All) touches on themes of land ownership and respect for food systems that do not rely on global capitalist imports. Heavy imports of goods such as grains and rice have made countries like Indonesia dependent on foods that are not produced endemically. These endemic staple foods, such as corn, tapioca, taro, sago, and other fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables (bottom left) are more sustainable for the surroundings and the diet, while also supporting the labour and produce of local farmers. Land ownership for farm workers is difficult as many work for large landlords, and are often violently suppressed by military and police when they peasant occupations of farmland to avoid corporate land-grabbing.

***Buruh Bersatu* (2021)**
Workers United

Woodcut print on fabric
122 x 242 cm

Buruh Bersatu (Workers United) calls for the unionisation of urban and industry workplaces, especially in the realms of factory and domestic work. It touches on issues of labour rights specifically for those who are further oppressed in the working class, namely the disabled (left bottom) and women (right bottom). It addresses issues of workplace discrimination, union busting and the collusion of local unions with factory owners, and the disrespect of human rights on the factory and warehouse floors. It also discusses the internal migration of rural populations to urban areas to be hired as cheap labour as a result of their limited opportunities to learn of their rights. One main figure in this work is Marsinah, who was an organizer based in Sidoarjo, East Java. She disappeared and was presumably killed by state forces in 1993. From there she became a figure to rally behind for many unionised workers throughout the archipelago. Both banners discuss the violence of capitalist systems and the physical destruction of land and people upheld by the profit desires of cronies and corporations.



Buruh Bersatu | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed



First They Came for Them, Then They Came for Us | Photo: Maarten Nauw, Framer Framed

Sekarang Mereka, Besok Kita (2021)
First They Came for Them, Then They Came for Us

Acrylic on canvas
400 x 800 cm

The large-scale banner encapsulates Taring Padi's central theme for their presentation at documenta fifteen. Drawing inspiration from Martin Niemöller's 1946 confessional prose 'First they came for us...,' Taring Padi forcefully demands an end to silence and calls for action. In their own words, Taring Padi states: "This banner is a reminder of the unrelenting greed and violence of capitalism. It highlights the power of collective resistance, of agitating, educating, and organising ourselves and our local communities to fight back. Sekarang Mereka, Besok Kita is a call for solidarity; to achieve significant change we have to organise and support each other at a global level. We strive to nurture local and global networks of resistance through the exchange of ideas and the sharing of skills and strategies."

Its poetic inspiration is interpreted as a call for solidarity for issues related to forms of injustice, particularly the urgency of climate injustice, as depicted through the lying white skeleton that holds a growing tree (centre). The banner

targets the exploitative industries of mining, especially the Freeport mine, the greed of the global capitalist oligarchy, over-extraction of natural resources, as well as the suppression of freedom under constant state surveillance. However, these denunciations constitute a very small part of the banner. The banner is mainly a celebration, depicted as a popular protest march. It celebrates the work of Taring Padi in the context of popular movements, as exemplified by the main figures of the march, which are wayang-inspired puppet figures (centre-left) holding the collective's classic cardboard puppets.

The cardboard puppets have been a present figure in the demonstrations Taring Padi have been a part of. The puppets serve as tools for agitation, and (more practically) as self-protection from police and other authorities. While the figures among the crowd are non-specific, they are inspired by comrades and activists the collective has worked with in the past. The banner, with its bright and vibrant colours, highlights the dynamic nature of political organising and the collective's work in agitating, educating, and organising people and communities on issues affecting their existence.

Lukisan Tokoh Masyarakat Adat (2021)
Painting Series of Indigenous People

Acrylic on canvas
62 x 82 cm

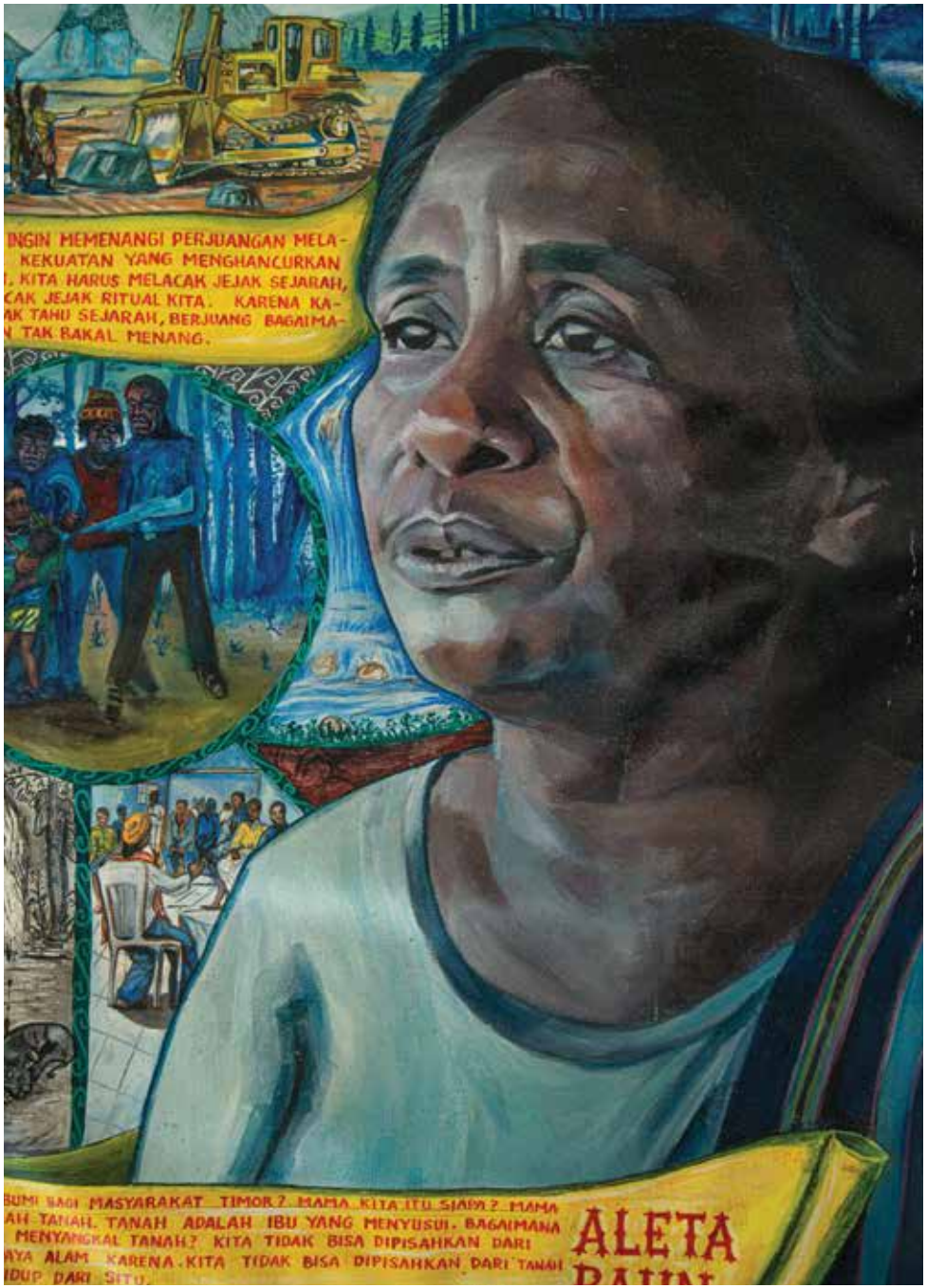
This painting series showcases the Indigenous Indonesian Peoples from various regions, including Maluku, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Toraja, East Nusa Tenggara, and Papua. Taring Padi had the opportunity to directly meet with these leaders during the Indigenous Peoples Congress in Tobelo, North Halmahera in 2012. The artworks serve as a demonstration of solidarity with indigenous communities, featuring portraits of significant representatives such as Yosepha Alomang, Rukmini Paata Tokehe, Aleta Baun, Apay Janggut, Elliza Kissya, and Den Upa Rombelayuk.

—

Poster Cukil (1998 – 2023)
Woodcut Posters

Woodcut prints
Variable dimensions

Woodcuts are one of the primary mediums employed by Taring Padi as political tools in their artwork. These woodcuts are printed on fabrics and papers, and they are often created in direct response to significant political events, such as general elections, fluctuations in petrol prices, or the pressing issue of climate change.



Lukisan Tokoh Masyarakat Adat | Photo: Bora Şekerci, Framer Framed

EXHIBITION DESIGN

Kevin van Braak envisions an exhibition space inspired by *Tanah Merdeka (liberated land/ space)* that is lively, collaborative, and constantly evolving. Using materials like cardboards, jute, bamboo, and recycled wood, he creates a unifying spatial feature drawn from nature. The flexible structural elements meet the diverse needs of communities and emphasize the evolving relationships between people and the space. The artworks extend to the outdoor area, inviting multiple perspectives and encouraging further engagement with Taring Padi's practice.

Kevin's exhibition space is an extension of his artistic practice, rooted in establishing connections with others. Influenced by Indonesia and its Dutch colonial past, he previously collaborated with Taring Padi in *Pressing Matters* (Framer Framed, 2018), which explored the complex relationship between Indonesia and Papua. This project exemplified the power of collective action, transcending individual efforts and building a network of engaged artists and visitors.

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