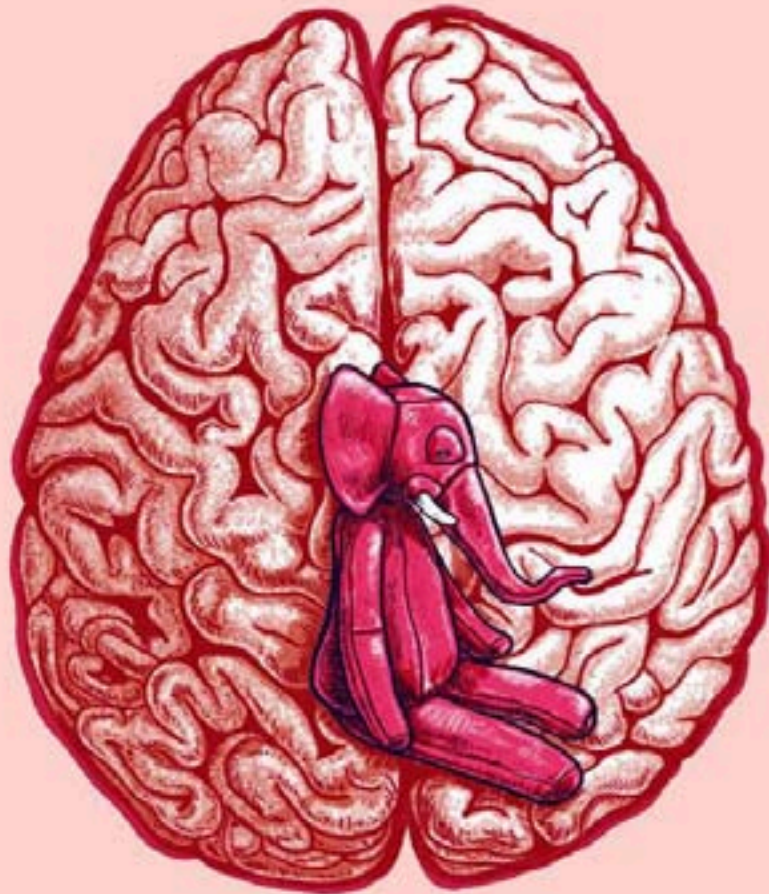


THE ELEPHANT NEVER FORGETS

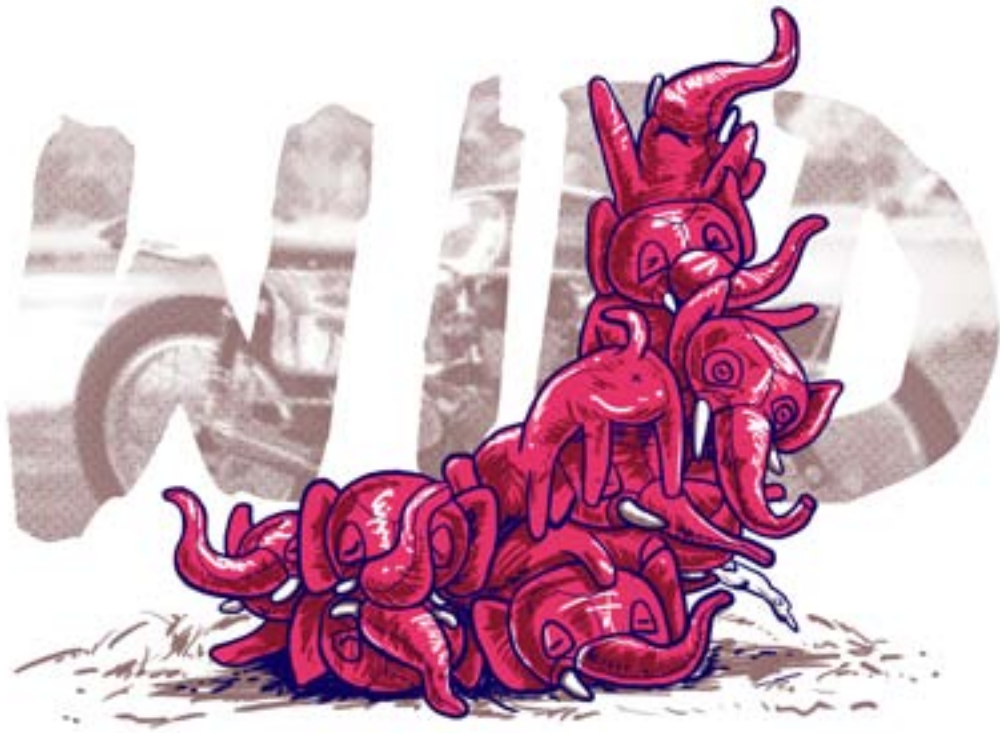


RUDI 'LAMPUNG' HERMAWAN

OPENING
23 MONDAY 2013
DECEMBER

KRACK GALLERY
LAPANGAN MINGGIRAN TIMUR
MINGGIRAN YOGYAKARTA

07.30 PM



Wild

I have lived in Jogja for more than a decade. These days I don't think too much about the small town where I grew up. My life is busy with work, looking after my family, socialising with friends here in Jogja. When I talk with my friends we discuss contemporary art, cars, music. Global society offers us new technologies every day, new ideas, new ways of doing things. Sometimes I wonder how I can possibly keep up with all these changes, but sometimes I think that my life is already good and I don't really need anything more.



Panas Dingin

In terms of politics, the issues that I usually think about are the big issues we read about on the front pages of the newspaper. Corruption, scandals, global economic crises. Our government makes decisions, supposedly on our behalf - like to reduce the fuel subsidy as a response to global economic conditions, but often forgets, or doesn't care about, the impact this will have on the daily lives of simple people trying to make a living.

In the global societies where most of us live governments use terms like 'global competitiveness', 'budget deficit' or 'economic development' to justify all sorts of baffling decisions. What would I know about these things? But once a year I return to the town where I grew up and from there I can see these issues with a different perspective; Injustice is injustice, and greed is simply greed.

THE ELEPHANT NEVER FORGETS

Since I moved to Yogyakarta in 2000 I have only gone home once a year to celebrate Idul Fitri in Lampung. In Lampung, Metro City and the Way Kanan are the two places that I always visit, Metro is a small town with friendly people and the majority of the population are migrants, and is the city I lived since the age of 12 years until I graduated from high school. Way Kanan is a district in North Lampung where the majority of the area is still plantation crops. I lived in Way Kanan since the age of five with my extended family and relatives.

I recall my childhood when almost this entire area was forests, which were then converted to acacia plantations by a private plantation company. Several years ago when I returned home these acacia plantations had been clearcut, leaving only tree stumps and creating a region that had once been lush transformed to arid and barren. The logging was apparently done by illegal loggers who live in the communities around the plantations. These areas were left bare for several years because the company suffered losses caused by the illegal loggers, and the company decided not to continue planting acacia.

The former acacia plantations that were transformed into bare areas caused large floods in the rainy season, and the wild animals that previously occupied these plantations started to go into the residential communities to find food. When I went back home the year after the acacia planting was ceased, the land had been taken over by the government to plant cassava. Cassava was chosen because cassava has a high economic value and rapid harvest time, but the department coordinating the project suffered many losses due to the theft of cassava by various local people.





Jembatan Gantung

Since I was in first grade this bridge was the only access to the nearest village where we could buy daily needs that were not available in our village, or even just to visit to relatives and siblings. In early 2000 the local government planned to replace the suspension bridge with a larger concrete bridge but the plan was rejected by the indigenous Lampong people, because they do not want to live side by side with the citizens of the migrant village.

Transmigration programs were undertaken in this area since the colonial era, and many people from Java and other areas have moved to this area in the past 50 years, including my family. In recent years there have been conflicts between local and migrant peoples, not only over cultural differences, but also over confusion about what is the actual status of their land holdings. These conditions resulted in the opportunity for corruption and criminal activity.

Today, due to the age of the old bridge and lack of maintenance the bridge is unfit for use, but we still use it because it is the only access to the nearby village.



Babi Singkong

Many of the farmers in our village complain that their cassava plants have been eaten by pigs, Cassava is a common crop besides rice and corn, but the area planted with cassava that was previously natural forest has been cleared, resulting in the loss of the pigs' natural habitat feeding grounds, so the cassava plants become food. Although in fact the cassava plantation is more than 3000ha, and actually most cassava crop is lost due to looting conducted by the local population.



Es Krim Sawit

The 'Transimgrasi' program which was launched by the government in the 1970's in the name of equitable development, and allowed it to transfer natural forests to plantations to provide livelihoods and economic improvement for the people of Indonesia. In addition to rubber, cassava, palm oil and coffee are plants that thrive in Lampung and planting these crops is the livelihood of the local people. Palm fruit can be utilized and processed into food, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, heavy or light industry and is a major ingredient in ice cream.

Who has benefited and who is harmed from practices such as 'development' as mentioned above? According to the Lampung Forest Service deforestation rate in protected forests Lampung in 1980 is 45.61%, but ten years later it was 83.57%.



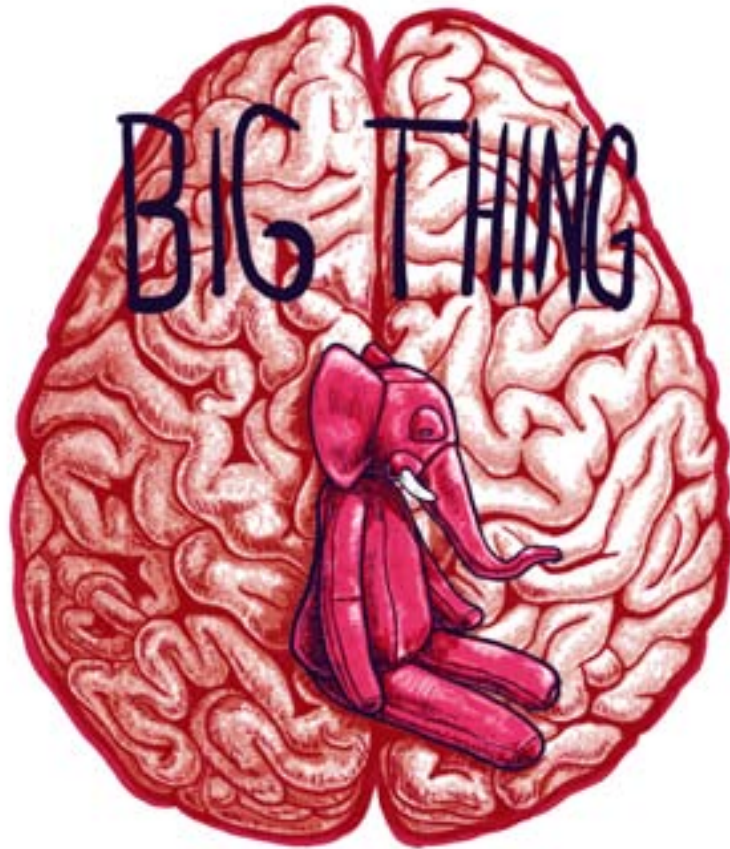
New Truck

To have a new and advanced truck is the fantasy of almost everyone in our village because the better the truck, the greater the capacity to deliver the harvest. For example our village head who every day removes three truckloads of cassava from the local plantations, not to mention transport the rubber harvest from the people who clean out the government plantations.



Big Heart

I have been using the motif of the elephant in my work for several years. At first I did not think too much about why I chose this symbol, it just felt right at the time. Over time, its meaning has become more apparent to me, the best things in life are like that. The Elephant relates to my home town, a place where there were once many elephants but now there are only a few. The elephant has the characteristics of 'Melankolis' - somewhat melancholy; 'Plegmatis' - private, quiet, consistent; 'Koleris' - resolute and strong in spirit.'



Memory

When children grow up they throw away the toys that once made them feel safe. For me the elephant is like a companion that I carry as a reminder of where I came from and also from the values I learned there. It is easy to believe in this modern world that we are not smart enough or powerful enough to participate in decisions that are being made all around us, but when we allow ourselves to think like tso often the result is the destruction of the things that are the most important for us. They say elephants do not forget.