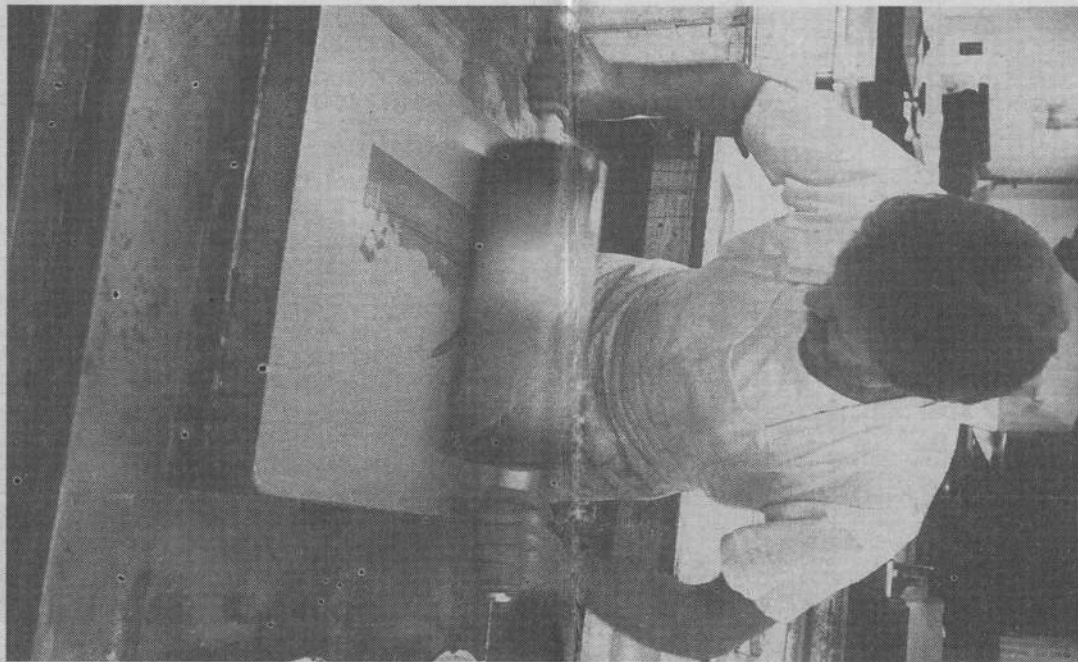
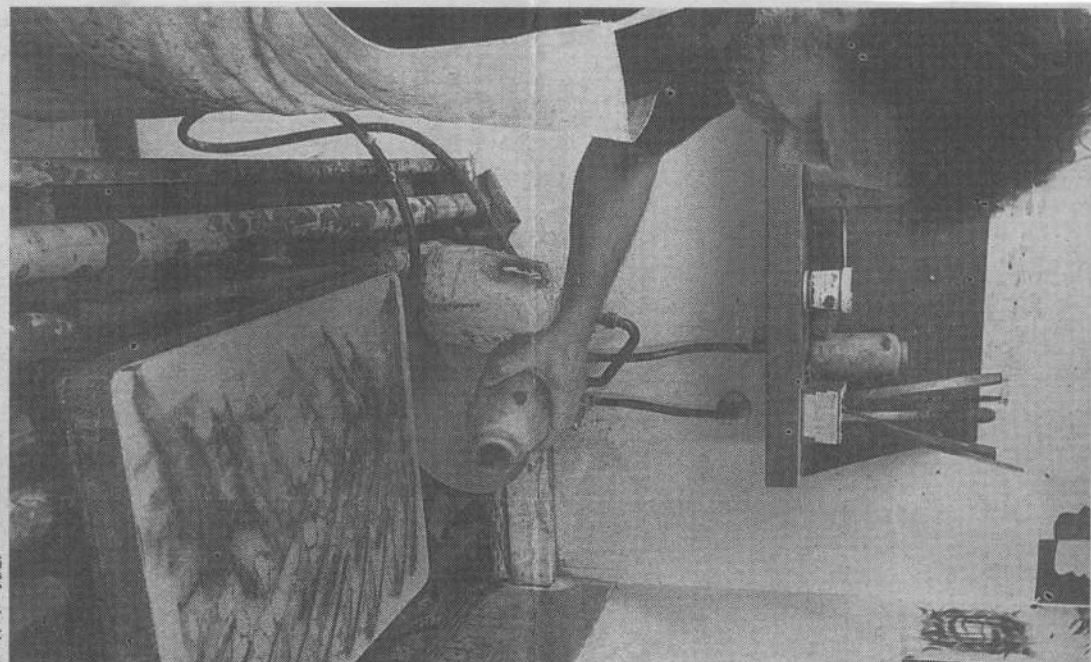


Features: Art/Design

Artist melds lithography, authenticity, creative process



JP/Martin Hunt



JP/Martin Hunt

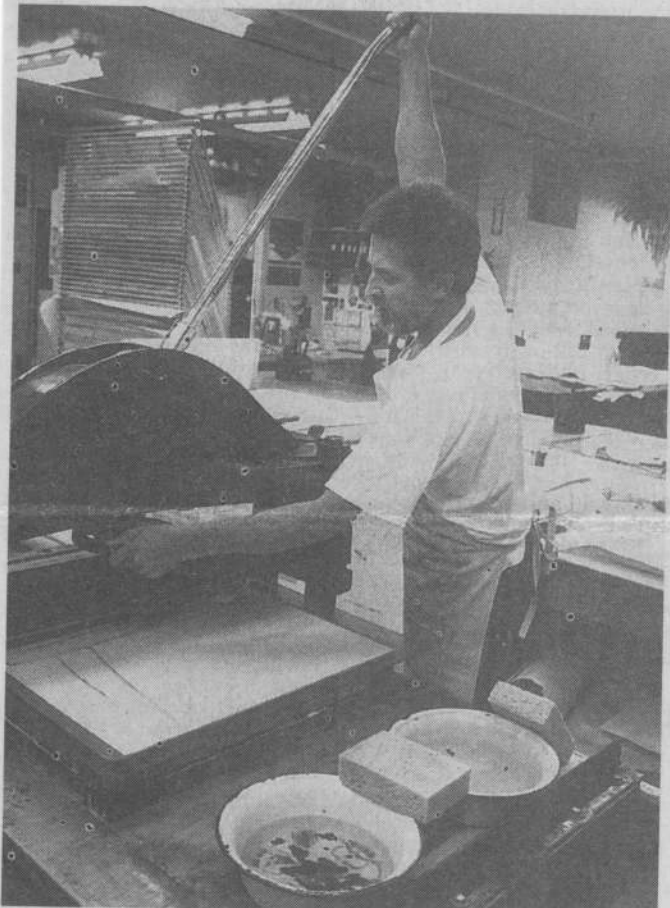


JP/Martin Hunt

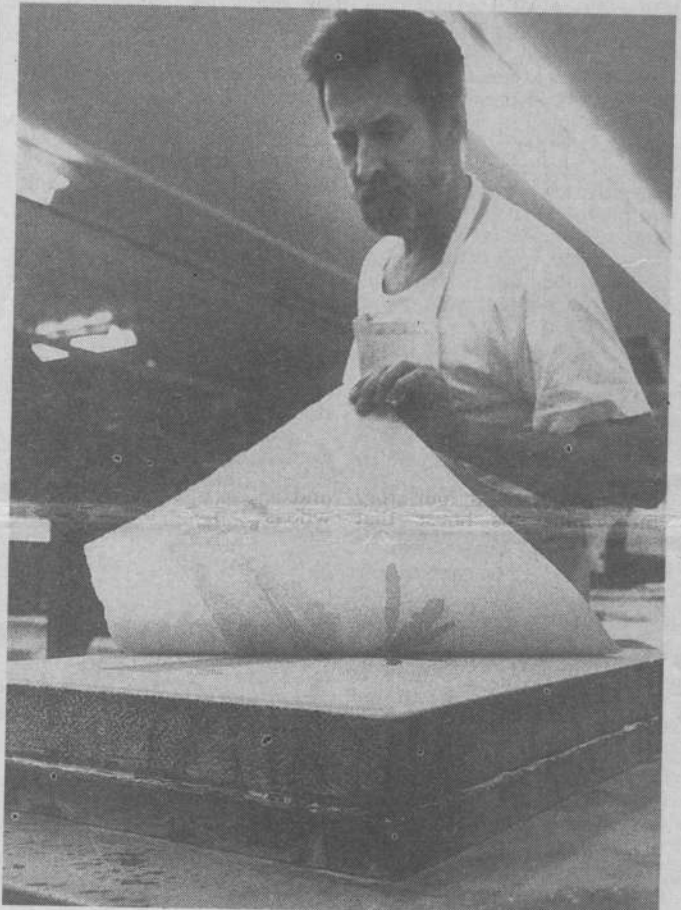


JP/Martin Hunt

Carborundum powder is sprinkled across the wet limestone slab (*left photo*) before one millimeter is ground from the surface to cleanse the stone before the initial drawing is done. Tracing paper, placed on top of thicker paper coated with iron oxide powder, is used to transfer the drawing to the stone with a ballpoint pen (*above, center*). After drawing has been stabilized on the stone with an etch solution, a solvent (*above, right*) is poured and rubbed into the stone to make way for the next step in which printing ink is applied.



JP/Martin Hunt



JP/Martin Hunt

After the stone is moved to the press bed, a rubber roller is charged with ink and rolled over the stone until there is enough ink on the image to print one sheet of paper (*left photo*). Paper is then placed on the stone and the press cranked into position before the pressure bar is lowered (*above, center*) and the stone moved beneath the scraper bar, which presses the paper onto the stone, transferring the ink from the stone to the paper. This complicated process results in a quality, original work of art (*above, left*).

JAKARTA (JP): Lithography is perhaps one of the most misunderstood creative processes. Mention lithography and art in the same breath and someone is likely to ask: How could a print be considered a work of art? Isn't it just a copy of something?

These questions arise because from the time the technique of lithography was developed in Germany by playwright Alois Senefelder in the early 19th century it has been used in the publishing and mass communication industries.

Lithography, which means "to write or draw on stone" in the Greek language, began with the process of placing an image on limestone and then transferring it to paper. In modern commercial printing, the lithographic plates are made of metal or paper, not stone.

Since it became a prominent commercial printing process at the beginning of the 20th century, technological advances in plates, inks, paper and presses have made lithography the most widely used method of commercial printing. The lithographic process is utilized in the production of books, magazines, calendars, catalogs, greeting cards, brochures, billboards and bonds.

Therefore, it is not surprising that the term lithographic print brings to mind something one could find on the shelves of a bookstore, a supermarket, or being thrust into the faces of motorists stopped at any of Jakarta's intersections.

So why would art lovers be drawn to an exhibition of lithographs?

The "Litho Madness" exhibition now on at the Dutch cultural center, Erasmus Huis, at Jl. HR Rasuna Said S-3, Kuningan, answers these questions.

The exhibition of 35 lithographs and seven pen and ink drawings by Canadian

artist Ken Pattern, which runs through Dec. 8, includes a display of photographs documenting the method of creating works of art with the lithographic process. And a video presentation explaining the steps in the process provides an even more detailed look at why a lithographic print produced by an artist can be defined as an original work of art.

Ken Pattern, who is better known in Jakarta for the detailed pen and ink drawings he has produced of Jakarta's rapidly disappearing kampungs in the almost seven years he has lived in Indonesia, says the opportunity to indulge

By Margaret Augusta

heavily himself in drawing is what drew him to lithography in the first place.

"The strength of what I do is in drawing," Pattern said of his initial interest in leaning the technique of lithography. "I saw that it was possible to repeat drawings with prints, while maintaining the quality."

Pattern, who graduated from high school in Canada in 1961, did not embark immediately upon a career in art due to concern it would be difficult to make a living in that field. Although he had been interested in drawing from the time he was a child, he would spend four years at university studying sociology before coming to the realization that his real love was art.

He began drawing, painting and exhibiting. It was, between his first public exhibition at the Vancouver Public Library gallery in 1978 and a second in 1979 that he discovered that lithography was an art form which could enable to make a living from his artwork.

"Printmaking meant I could show in several galleries in different areas at the same time. I could achieve more exposure

whom might find his pen and ink drawings, which sell for as much as 2,800,000 apiece, too expensive.

"Printmaking is a democratic media. Unit cost is lower and more affordable, while a print is still original art," he said of his lithographic works.

The lithographs on display during the current exhibition cost from Rp 110,000 to Rp 765,000 per unframed piece and from Rp 175,000 to Rp 850,000 for framed works. All of the works on display are from series of 70 prints each.

"Lithography is a nice compromise of still producing original art and art that is affordable by a larger number of people, that reaches more people," Pattern said.

Pattern produces this relatively more affordable art through hours of painstaking concentration as he moves step by step through a complicated and repetitive process.

The first step Pattern takes toward producing a lithograph is to "grain" a limestone slab. This involves grinding down the surface of the stone with a mixture of water and carborundum (abrasive grit) and a stainless steel disk called a levigator. Most lithography stones, which are 10 cm thick when new, come from a quarry north of Munich, Germany.

Then he selects a sketch he wants to transfer to the surface of the stone. Once this image is traced onto the stone with a paper smeared with iron oxide powder and a pen. Pattern then applies the basic principle "water and oil don't mix" by drawing over the image left by the tracing process with a litho (grease) pencil.

Then the stone is prepared with rosen powder and talc, before an "etch", a solution of gum arabic and nitric acid, is applied. The chemical process resulting from the application of the etch permits the image area to accept oil-

based ink and to repel water, while the rest of the stone repels the ink.

Once the ink is applied, it is allowed to dry before more rosen, talc and etch solution are applied. It is necessary to repeat this process several times in order to stabilize the image before moving to the printing stage.

Once this point has been reached, Pattern prints his lithograph by pressing a piece of paper onto the stone.

This process can take up to one month for a four-color lithograph, with 40 to 60 hours of that time devoted to drawing.



JP/Martin Hunt

This lithograph titled *Ibu* is among the works by Ken Pattern on display at Erasmus Huis.

and not be tied to one place," he told *The Jakarta Post* a few days before "Litho Madness" opened.

In order to learn the technique, Pattern enrolled at the Emily Carr College of Art and Design in Vancouver where he studied printmaking under Bob Evermon, a graduate of Tamarind Institute, the foremost school of lithography in the United States.

During his introduction to the process, Pattern was to discover that besides providing greater opportunity to display his works to a larger audience, printmaking would enable him to offer affordable art to a larger number of people, many of