

# Ken Pattern: viewing the capital

JAKARTA POST, DECEMBER 2, 2007

## through black and white



Home Delivery Lithograph, 2007

Alvin Darlanika Soedarjo  
The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

Watching ordinary people pass by — pulling *gerobak*, riding a motorbike and selling traditional herbs or *jamu* — while sitting in a *warung* may seem futile for many Jakartans. However, for Canadian artist Ken Pattern, this becomes a sublime inspiration.

“When you sit there, you see a constant parade of people selling things, like the old traditional scene. I just think that we will see the end of that era soon,” said the artist.

“Some of the places in Jakarta are disappearing very quickly, such as the *kampung*. New buildings are replacing them rapidly,” said Pattern, whose main niche is lithography, a printing technique in which the image to be printed is fixed on a stone.

In his last work, Pattern focused on the everyday street

scene in the Bangka and Kemang areas of South Jakarta.

Pattern, who turns 65 this year, first arrived in Jakarta in 1989 and was instantly captivated by Indonesia. Since then, he has churned out prints based on his personal observations.

Passionate in drawing since the beginning, Pattern started paying more attention to the capital, which he found as contrasting. In “The Other Side” prints, Pattern rendered a scene of Jakarta’s buildings from the viewpoint of a slum by the river.

“Jakarta is all mixed up, very interesting and contrasting to see side by side. Something very old stands beside something new: poor slums can exist next to something made of glass and steel.”

His imagery of Jakarta comes in black and white to represent the contrasting connection. Outside of Jakarta or

Indonesia, he usually does his art in color, whether by oil or acrylic.

The landscape and everything doesn't change that much, but the physical and social changes in Jakarta was quite big, he said.

"Most of the *kampung* scenes that I draw or lithograph don't have any historical meaning because they are not very old. They may only be 20, 40 years old. They have no architectural value, they have no historical value, but they do have social value."

He said what concerned him were the changes were very disruptive to the poor, who represent a social class whom nonetheless make the city what it is.

In a way, Pattern also functions as a documenter.

"When I first came to Jakarta, I used to look out from the tall building and thought that this was not a city but a bunch of *kampung*s. It's all

connected together."

Pattern was awed by the sense of creativity that the poor possess in the capital. He said that the transmigrants who come to the city usually gravitate towards the river.

"When the poor people first come here, they have nothing. But they make their shelter out of trash and bamboo. They possess interesting skills and imagination," he said.

The things here that drive him crazy? "The malls, which are foreign concept, don't really connect with the heritage of Indonesia and don't solve the problem of this place."

As for his assorted prints, Pattern added that they are not generic reproduction. "Lithograph is the perfect medium for someone who enjoys drawing. Cause when you look at a lithograph, you think that you are looking at a drawing."

Every year Pattern travels back to Vancouver and stay for a few months to do his litho-

graph. Lithography, he stressed, is not a photo mechanical reproduction system because it's all done by hand.

Each print is individually inked and pressed through the press to make the print. It is considered a piece of art as painting is because of the slow and long process.

Once the limited prints (20 to 75 prints) are sold out — Pattern is not be able to make them again as the original image, which he drew on a limestone, has been ground for his other work.

"The prints allow me to make multiples of a single image, which means that the price per piece can be a lot less."

*Ken Pattern exhibition:  
Nov. 24 - Dec. 29  
Galeri Hadiprana  
Jl. Kemang Raya no. 30,  
Jakarta.*