

## YOUR LEISURE READING

# Reason is still basic to Canadian surrealist's works

JAKARTA (JP): Canadian artist Ken Pattern likes to 'speak' in symbols and in clear details. This stands out like a red thread running through all his works, no matter what technique he has used so far, whether it is pen-and-ink, stone litho, etching or oil painting.

Canadian Ambassador Hall will start tonight (Thursday, Jan. 25), the exhibition of more than fifty pieces of Pattern's works, which will be open to the public from Jan

26 till Feb 3, at the Erasmus Huis, the Dutch Cultural Center.

The works on display consist partly of paintings in oil, pen-and-ink, litho graphs and etchings made over the past 10 years in Canada, and partly of those made during the artist's time in Indonesia. Particularly interesting are his themes and the variety of techniques through which his details shine with metaculous precision. His pen-and-ink works are exam-

plary for this, and they belong to the finest pieces in this collection.

Practically all his works on display reflect his love for nature, and his concern about the decline of the natural environment. Therefore, it comes as 'natural' that his metaphors are deeply rooted in the surrounding nature.

It seems that the environmental decline has held his close attention from the very beginning. Already his early lithos and etches expose his

By Carla Bianpoen

distress about what people can do to destroy nature. In *Perspective* demonstrates how only a shadow of a tree is left. Hovering over horizontally laid lumber, it works as a warning of the threatening danger if irresponsible activities continue.

"People only think of money and what is left only a shadow, a skeleton, of what



Indonesia's Independence as expressed in *Founding Nation*, an oil on canvas measuring 60x90 centimeters. This is only one of Ken Pattern's works now on display at Erasmus Huis in Jakarta.

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used to be", he said in genuine concern.

Also his recent painting *Theme Park* expresses this concern. Asphalt and concrete are covering the soil where once nature was prevailing. "Now, to have nature, you have to recall from memory", said Ken, and he added, "because it's covered by buildings and asphalt."

**Stranger**

It is then, typical of this painter to bring the natural environment of his home country to the Indonesian tropical scene. Symbolizing his arrival as a foreigner, his acquaintance with and his 'capture' in paradise, he places an iceberg in the midst of the tropical blue waters. In a series which he calls *Icebergs in Paradise* he displays how the iceberg first stands as a loner far out in the sea, then comes closer until it is 'beached' and captured in a circle of palm trees. This seems like a strange world of fantasy, but in fact it is based on reality. It shows how totally different cultures of opposing climates are now meeting in a ever shrinking world.

The works in his series on the Canadian Rockies are more like photographs taken with an artistic eye. Huge and impressive, with an atmospheric tone enhanced by the dark line of pine trees, these snow-covered rocks were to help Pattern overcome his initial problem with the almost unbearable heat in Indonesia.

"When we first came to stay here, I had problems with the heat," said Pattern, whose wife works for a development project. And the only way for him to counteract this was to think "cold." And so he came to start painting the Canadian Rockies. "There is a village right in the middle of the

Rockies, called Jasper Village," explained the artist pointing at one of his paintings with a twisting line going up, blazing a trail through thick covers of snow. "strange," he uttered, "it needed the heat to get me working on what I had in mind for a dozen of years."

His *founding Nation* is also eye-catching. As for many other foreigners, Ken finds volcanoes symbolic of Indonesia. Scattered over a canvas of 60 x 90, surrounded by the blue waters of the Indonesian sea, the red and white of the Indonesian flag comes out of the volcano symbolizing the zeal of the people's struggle for independence and the peace which every country hopes for. "Just like the lava spitting out of the volcano becomes fruitful land once it has cooled down," Pattern said. The white flow in his overcast symbolizes the fantasies and dreams that the founding fathers of this nation must have had before they ever started fighting for the idea of an independent nation.

Although dreams and fantasies are part of Pattern's concept of art, his works are led by the logic of reason. "before I start, I have it all here," he revealed pointing at his head.

Ken Pattern started being an artist before having any art education. "I have always

had a good ability of drawing," he said. Then, he saw Escher's works and fell in love with it. So he went to a summer course, for he just had to know the technique. So printing is what he loves. It is certainly not the easiest way to create art. The printing technique he has chosen is stone lithography which is a challenge indeed. One has to be real physically strong to do that, for heavy stones are used, and some artists in stone lithography end up with back problems.

The process of stone litho covers four basic steps. First the stone needs to be grinded and made flat, then the image is put on the stone, following is the process of stabilizing the image on the stone, and then comes the last part which is the printing.

Contrary to in Europe, in North America an artist usually prints his own work, and Pattern is no exception. It is hard work, especially if you used several colors. To produce one color alone takes at least four intensive days of work, and for each additional color the whole process must be repeated. Experts say "it is the most physically demanding print technique." In addition, it is very time-consuming. Yet, Masters like Picasso, Chagall, Miro and Toulouse Lautrec often used eight to twelve colors.