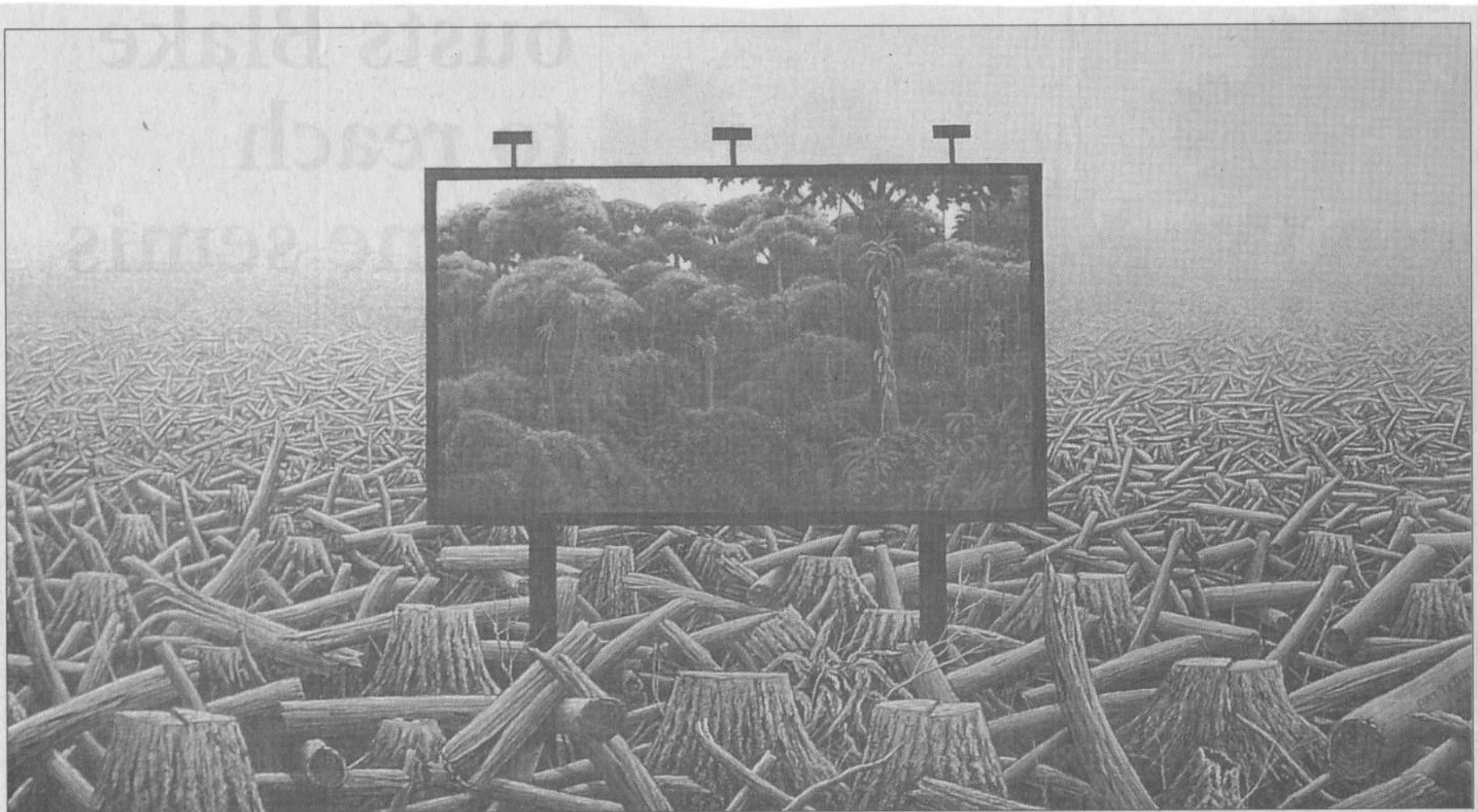


Pattern revisits global theme in new pieces

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Habitat, acrylic on canvas, 2008.

Courtesy of Ken Pattern

Ary Hermawan
The Jakarta Post/Jakarta

When Canadian artist Ken Pattern came to Indonesia in 1989 with his wife Helen Vanwel, he felt like he was an iceberg melting and decided to make a series of paintings entitled "Icebergs in Paradise".

Not unlike bewitched European painters with their *mooi indie*, or "the beautiful Indonesia" landscape paintings symbolizing their first impressions of the archipelago, Pattern's first encounter with the tropical country included its idyllic beaches and coconut trees on secluded islands.

A few years later, he was drawn to the traditional lives of ordinary Jakartans and tried to see the world "behind the wall from where he lived".

"I started to walk through the various *gang* (alleys) to see how people lived, and also the transportation, the *gerobak* (carriages), the *bajaj* (three-

wheeled vehicle), the buses, and all the types of little *warung* (stalls)," he said.

Since the early 1990s, Pattern has involved himself in making a "social documentation" on the ongoing transformation of Jakarta; an old city in a densely populated developing nation trying to build up its economy.

His works are reminiscent of the works of the late Indonesian sketch artist X-Ling, who liked to draw buildings and people in Kota or the "Old City", only Pattern uses lithography as his medium.

While it took Ling only a few minutes or hours to finish his sketches, it takes Pattern a flight to Vancouver and a few days — or sometimes weeks — of processing, drawing and printing to complete a lithograph.

Lithography, which means "to write on a stone" in Greek, was initially developed in 1798 by the German map inspector Aloys Senefelder, and was

later used mainly as a means by which to reproduce works of art and create illustrations for books and magazines in the nineteenth century.

"Today, hand-printed lithographs are created by artists in many parts of the world and are held in high regard as original works of art," Pattern says on his website (www.kenpattern.or.id).

His meticulously-drawn lithographs are mostly black and white, because, he said, he always sees Jakarta as a city of contrast — or as he puts it, a "yin-yang" city.

Pattern, who produces other works of art using different media, is known for his urban themes and as a lithographer of Jakarta's landscapes.

His last exhibition, at Galeri Hadiprana in 2007, still lingered around the theme of urban development; only this time he focussed more on the people and their traditions rather than urban spaces, like he did in the mid 1990s.

In a charity exhibition at the Grand Melia Hotel (from April 29 to May 17), Pattern, though still displaying his lithographed reflections of Jakarta, has made another shift in themes.

"My early works were mostly environmental and I am coming back to it again," he said.

"I was very involved in the environmental movement in Canada in the early seventies and much of my works are about the conflict between human beings and nature," he said.

Six of his early etchings with an environmental theme are also on display at the exhibition.

The last piece he made, he said, is entitled *Habitat*, which is part of a series of paintings he calls the "Signs of Our Time". *Habitat* depicts a disheartening landscape of colorless, dead trees with a billboard featuring a rain forest.

He said he made that paint-

ing after reading an article in *The Jakarta Post* that reported the Indonesian government had granted licenses to a number of mining companies that allowed them to use protected forests.

"I don't understand why it is happening. Indonesia was hosting the huge global warming conference in Bali and after that they turned around and did something that is so backward," he said.

However, he said the painting was not aimed at Indonesia alone, but to all countries in the world, adding the environmental problem was a global issue.

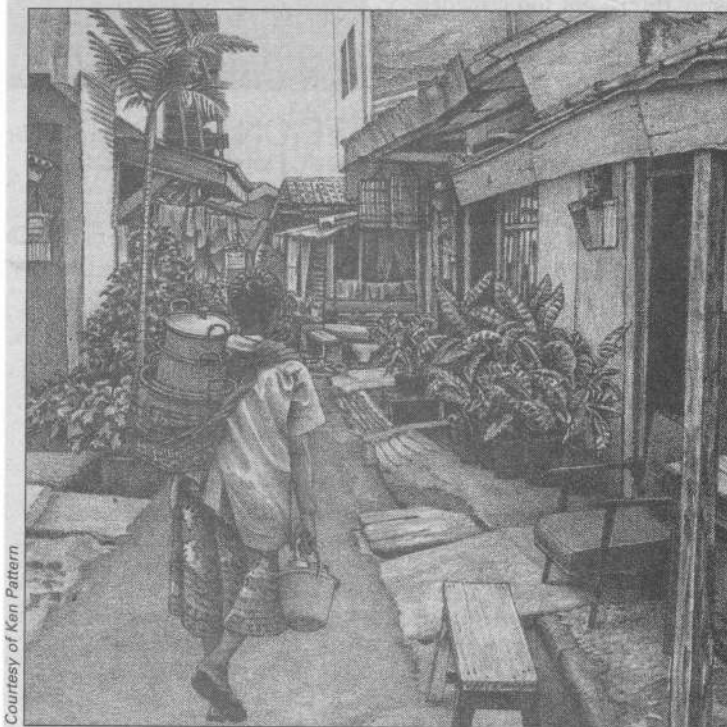
Another new piece, *Want Ad*, which is a criticism of the poor air quality of major cities, portrays a city blanketed by haze and a billboard showing a clear blue sky in its center.

"A 'want ad' is a type of advertising you can see in the newspaper. But it has a double meaning in it because I want to



Courtesy of Ken Pattern

Meals On Wheels, lithograph, 2007.



Courtesy of Ken Pattern

Home Delivery, lithograph, 2007.

have a blue sky, I want to have a clean air, I want to breathe the air I live in," he said.

Living in Kemang, South Jakarta, for nearly two decades, Pattern knows only too well that Jakarta is one of the most polluted cities in the world. But again, he said his work was not aimed exclusively at the city.

"All major cities have air-quality problems," he said. Pat-

tern and his wife lived in Beijing before moving to Indonesia.

"The works I was doing before were specific to Indonesia but when I'm talking about the rain forest in *Habitat* and the air quality in *Want Ad*, these are universal themes. It is a criticism of the whole planet," he said.

"Global warming is not a joke. This is really a serious matter."