

WHAT DOES A SCANNER SEE? HE ASKED HIMSELF.  
I MEAN, REALLY SEE?  
INTO THE HEAD? DOWN INTO THE HEART?

DOES A PASSIVE INFRARED SCANNER LIKE THEY USED TO USE  
OR A CUBE-TYPE HOLO-SCANNER LIKE THEY USE THESE DAYS,  
THE LATEST THING,  
SEE INTO ME - INTO US - CLEARLY OR DARKLY?

I HOPE IT DOES, HE THOUGHT, SEE CLEARLY,  
BECAUSE I CAN'T ANY LONGER THESE DAYS SEE INTO MYSELF.  
I SEE ONLY MURK. MURK OUTSIDE; MURK INSIDE.

I HOPE, FOR EVERYONE'S SAKE, THE SCANNERS DO BETTER.

BECAUSE, HE THOUGHT, IF THE SCANNER SEES ONLY DARKLY,  
THE WAY I MYSELF DO,  
THEN WE ARE CURSED, CURSED AGAIN AND LIKE WE HAVE BEEN CONTINUALLY,  
AND WE'LL WIND UP DEAD THIS WAY,  
KNOWING VERY LITTLE AND GETTING THAT LITTLE FRAGMENT WRONG TOO.

- A SCANNER DARKLY,  
PHILIP K DICK

# INTRODUCTION

## LOOKING GLASS SELF IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION

Hordes of one-dimensional<sup>1</sup> men amble aimlessly on the street, lulled into submission by their daily dosage of mind-softening narcotics. This scene has leapt out from the pages in the dystopian novel where it belongs, into our present-day reality. The one-dimensional man was nurtured to existence for the ease of propaganda and market profit by digital mass media. Social media, the most potent kind of social narcotics homogenizes taste, opinions, selves. In this digital age, the construction of one's identity, while enriched with more information flow than ever, has become a passive act.

According to George Mead, the self-idea is constructed by taking the role of a generalized other.<sup>2</sup> In Cooley's Looking-Glass Self Theory, it is stated that the self is indefinitely varied.<sup>3</sup> Different selves are formulated to accommodate for the range of various others we are in contact with socially. The resulting judgement or appraisal by others that we received in real life is then used to fine-tune our self-presentation. The active part of this process is that the self classifies the others into hierarchies of influences; each presence does not affect one's self-feeling on the same degree.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the judgement is not received with full faith on what was verbally said and obvious but also factoring in subtle cues such as body language, tone, and expression.<sup>5</sup> The self-idea constructed through this rich and multi-layered feedback lends itself to be interpretative, proactive, and unique. On the contrary, the one-dimensional man is an exact and uniformed self-idea policed through endorsement and condemnation by both peers and authority through the means of media.

Digital interaction happens in a disembodied space with disembodied telecopresence of others where symbolic non-verbal cues are not visible.<sup>6</sup> Mediated and standardised response of like versus dislike substitutes the subtle and organic. Different algorithms for each digital platform further distort the feedback, amplifying one and minimizing the other. The result is a dark mirror where one cannot get an accurate reading of their self-presentation's appraisal. The shroud of anonymity in the cyberspace, its rapid break-neck speed, and just the sheer vastness of the internet make it impossible for one to engage in the physiological process of taking the role of others. The others have become unimaginable.

“Without fixed and distinct communities, the range of potential interactions becomes infinite. These are, after all, so many ‘others’, so many unique identities to choose from. . . . Consequently, there will be no fixed self, but multiple selves, and identity will be further fragmented with each interaction in cyberspace.”<sup>7</sup>

The one-dimensional man model seems to be the exact opposite of the fragmented cyber-self, but it really is not. The syndrome brought about by cyber media hegemony is a paradoxical sense of self; one that is “decentered, dispersed, and multiplied in continuous instability”<sup>8</sup>, yet at the same time, uniform, conforming, one-dimensional and hivemind-like.



### STILL LIFES & PORTRAITS AS A PARABLE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Rosit Mulyadi expressed to me that his artworks are expressions of personal experience and frustration living in the information age, interpreted using the Looking-Glass Self theory. It was not the impression I initially had when looking at his paintings; a series artwork comprised of modified and altered renditions of old masters paintings partially blurred or obscured by other means. Its formal aspect and aesthetic choice seem to be disjointed from its concept. The connection between the two did not become evident to me until I took a step back and recognize the main two genres of old masters paintings that the artist choose to appropriate: still lifes and portraits, with just a few exceptions.

In Rosit's artwork, still lifes and portraits become an exceptionally fitting allegory for the media as it shares paralleling characteristics. Still lifes, and in extension, portraits have the tendency of being what it is called 'amusement art'<sup>9</sup>, of course, I am not saying that all still lifes and portraits are just an amusement art, but some has developed to become so. It functions the same way as many daytime operas, blockbuster movies, billboard music, and online cat videos does in our age. It does not seek to discover unexplored territories, let alone challenge the status quo. Its purpose is to be nice and inoffensive, a distraction from the issues faced in reality.

Still lifes, in particular, was regarded as a safe path to reach fame at the time. It is a neutral canvas for whatever narrative it needed to present. Naturalistic and life-like, still lifes give off the illusion of proof. The familiar subject matter it depicts, newspaper, vases, ham, cutleries, fruits create an image of ideal everydayness; honest, spontaneous or accidental, while in reality, it is very much staged.

Portraits, especially at its peak era of popularity, was a disembodied public self-image. It is an instrument to exhibit sophistication and pride. The costume, the pose, or even objects in the background are marks of merit, showing the portrait model's refined tastes and desires.<sup>10</sup> Self-produced contents, be it stills or moving pictures while serving as proof, also can be an instrument of deception<sup>11</sup>, owing to the unlimited editing authority of a single creator. Artist's servitude to their commissioner and models could be interpreted as an editing authority to some degree. Mme Moitessier portraits painted by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres and appropriated by Rosit in *'Too Bad to be True #4'*, was not created without the Madame's meddling. On the two portraits worked on by Ingres, she had attempted successfully to reduce the distance of her eyes, and with fantastic diplomatic strategy, the size of her arms.<sup>12</sup> A 'good' portrait, or 'ones that will please the sitter', is a mix between semblance, realism, and idealised beauty; an effect one can archive successfully without any diplomatic effort through photo-editing software.

All these subtle styling and editing could be done without witnesses, and if there is no witness what hinders it from being accepted as truth?

This dated practice sounds familiar to us, and it is because we, or at least, the general public in our radar still partake in it through the social media. An incoming flux of idyllic yet effortless and candid pictures, creating inaccurate imaginations of others in our head. An image of others that is so ideal and unarchivable that we would use as a 'mirror' against which we craft our self-presentation.

Politically, this syndrome is a self-sustaining system of market and behavioural control, really. The media selects a figure that naturally possesses the taste, opinion and behaviour that they desire for the public to have, no matter how idealistic or impossible it is. It then endorses that figure, and subtly their qualities too.<sup>13</sup> The majority public strives to be just like the role model, emulating their endorsed behaviours in the hopes that maybe by being as similar as possible to the ideal, they could get their statuses elevated, or have a shot to be a role model themselves.





### BLURS, PIXELATIONS, AND OTHER MEANS OF CONCEALMENT

In both his portrait and still life series, Rosit obscures parts of the painting either through blurring and smudging, pixelating, or blatantly just painting over with solid colour, except for '*Jauh Tampak Samar Dipelupuk*' series where he blurs the entire image. He positions the artificiality of still life objects as the opposite of the natural, unstaged world. The blurring itself is a materialization of the artist's confusion in determining the sign of artificiality. The beautiful, or as mentioned before, "nice and inoffensive" are often used to conceal uglier ulterior motives, be it political or not. Although fully aware of this tendency, Rosit acknowledges that he couldn't see beyond the constructed images and determine which beauty is, in fact, a distraction.

Obscuring part or the entirety of the paintings does not make much difference for some people. The wholly blurred picture in '*Jauh Tampak Samar Dipelupuk*' series are still recognizable for most of us. One is Van Gogh's '*Sunflowers (fourth version)*' and the other Claude Monet's '*Impression, Soleil levant*'. This shows that knowledge can be accessed in recognizing things that are veiled. For the untrained eyes, these fuzzy blends of colours could have no meaning aside from being just a beautiful distraction.

However, one could never be too sure that education, familiarity and proficiency always work in distinguishing glittering generalities from the genuine. The distraction, the amusement art, could present itself as refined and elite. It does not have to always manifest in the low brow. Having the intellectual privilege to enjoy otherwise unaccessible pleasures does not mean that one is salvaged from the ploy of distraction. It could be that we are just trapped in a more sophisticated variety of the very same trick.<sup>14</sup>

## INTERNET CULTURE AND INFO POLLUTION

The aesthetic Rosit chose for this body of work incorporates a lot of references to the internet culture, especially on anonymity, noise, information pollution, slippage of meaning, and remix culture driven by free -impression-based- association. For example, in his appropriation of *'Militia Company of District XI under the Command of Captain Reynier Reael'* or also known as *'The Meagre Company'* by Frans Hals and Pieter Codde, Rosit uses internet lingo *'(L)Mirl'* as his title, an acronym for the phrase 'Let's meet in real life'.

The digital self lacks in unconcealable immediate information that is apparent in person: physical characteristic, accent, gender and outward nature, even with the aid of audiovisual broadcast. The digital self becomes a symbolic project, heavily narrative in nature, with the need and flexibility of constant retelling.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, there is no need for a mutual connection (third-person) for two individuals to engage in a conversation online. The result is that communication with strangers that previously deemed dangerous becomes normalized.<sup>16</sup> Because of the illusory protection of mutual-anonymity, one may even expose their deepest darkest secret to an online confidant, ones that are being kept from even their closest in-real-life friends.<sup>17</sup> Their willingness to be vulnerable was on the premise that they will never meet these 'intimate strangers' in person, maintaining the safety and pride of their physical selves.

The man of Militia Company of District XI in Rosit's painting appears pixelated from the top down to their knees. Only their boots, almost uniformed and impersonal, remains visibly apparent. The pressure to meet in real life brought one to the realization that their shield of anonymity is in fact, fragile. What one utters out of trust and confidence in their own safety, has possibly granted a stranger the power of surveillance; an upper hand and munition to be used against them. Ironically, the original painter Frans Hals refused to meet the Militia Company in their base for their sitting session; instead, he invited them to his studio.<sup>18</sup> This amusing coincidence reflects our survival tendency, that is to remain in the safety of our familiar domain.

The other element of internet culture that Rosit refers in his work is information pollution. As previously mentioned about the one-dimensional man and media hegemony, the society is pumped full of information but with an ultimate lack of focus and time to digest and react. We rarely have to seek out information anymore; instead, data is shoved at us in constant and overbearing flux.<sup>19</sup> Information pollution or info-pollution is this overload of non-essential, repeating, contradicting, and overlapping information manifesting into noise and noisiness. This sentiment is apparent throughout a large portion of paintings in this exhibition. It is expressed rather obviously in the inscription within *'Sumbang #1'*, *'Sumbang #2'* and *'Too Bad to be True #4'* that directly mention or complain about noisiness.



Transcription from 'Sumbang #1':

BERHENTI MENDENGAR TAK BERHENTI BICARA SEDIKIT BICARA TAK  
SEDIKIT MAUNYA OMONG KOSONG TAK ADA ARTINYA NGOMONG  
NGOMONG KAPAN MATINYA OLADALAH DIGUSUR LAGI DIPUKUL  
MUNDUR DI TANAH SENDIRI HOBBY PUKUL HOBBY SIAPA BLA BLA  
BLA (stencilled)

Translation:

(stop listening nonstop speaking few words not few demand meaningless  
bullshit by the way when will (you) die being evicted again pushed back again  
in one's own land beating as a hobby whose hobby blah blah blah)



Transcription from 'Sumbang #2':

OMONG KOPONG NYARING BUNYINYA (scribed)  
DIKAU TERBIASA DIAM SEKALI BICARA SUMBANG (stencilled)  
MAKE SHIT WITH DRAMA (scribed)  
PALSU (scribed)  
KURANG PICIK (scratched)

Translation:

(empty talk sounds loud)  
(you accustomed to be quiet once you open your mouth it's out of tune)  
(make shit with drama)  
(fake)  
(not shallow enough)



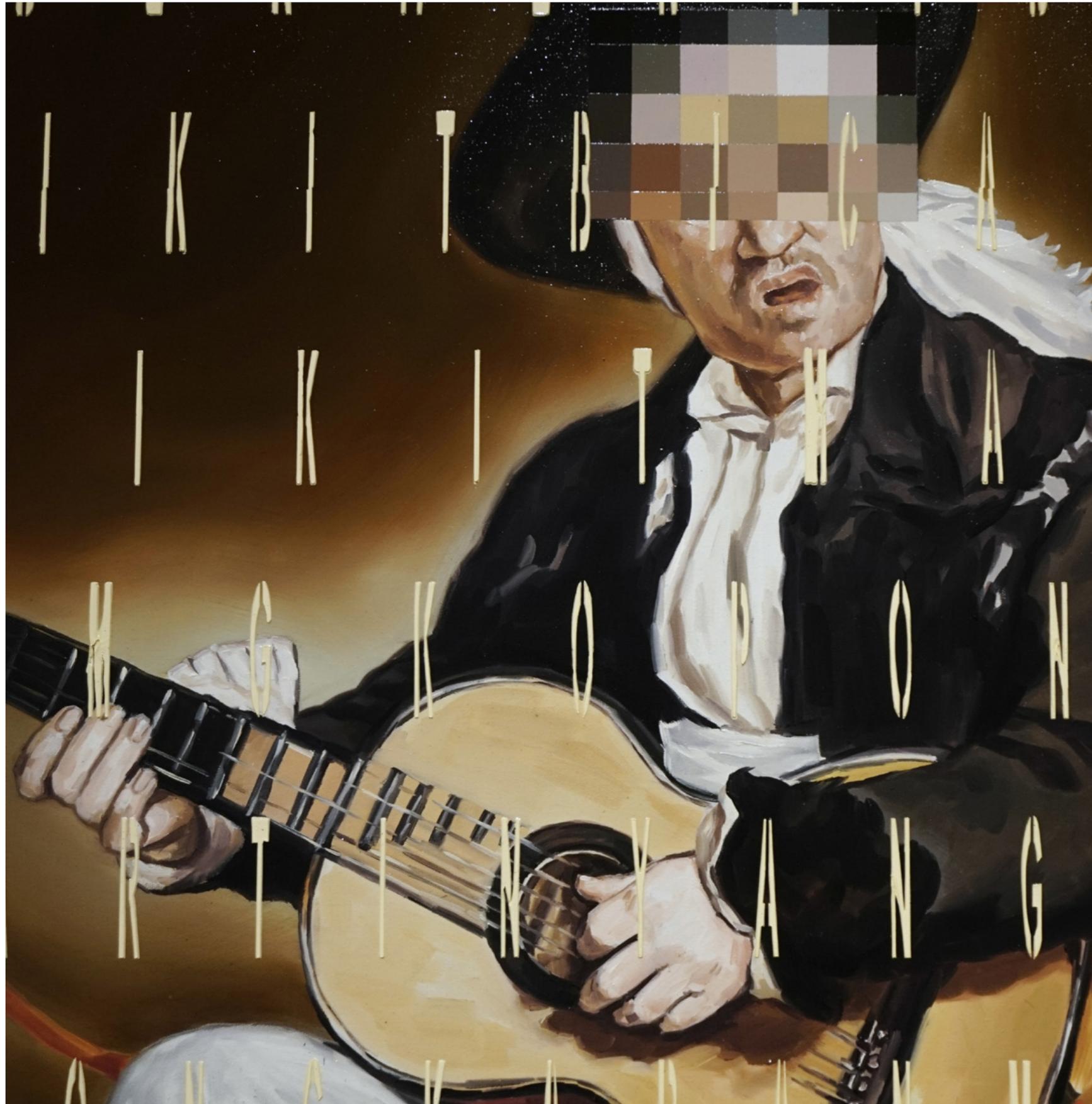
Transcription from 'Too Bad to be True #4':

DO I REALLY LOOK LIKE I CARE? (inverted)  
BERISIK ZONK HATE (stencilled)  
YOU TALK TOO MUCH (stencilled, crossed)  
KOALISI MAKI SANA MAKI SINI, (scribed)  
KUASA GUSUR SANA GUSUR SINI (stencilled)  
If you repeat a lie often enough (scribed)

Translation:

(do I really look like I care?)  
(noisy blank hate)  
(you talk too much)  
(curse here curse there coalition,  
power to evict here evict there)  
(if you repeat a lie often enough)





'Sumbang #1' is particularly interesting because it combines two concepts, the element of noise and info-pollution, and the element of staginess. Historians doubt that the sitter for this painting is really a Spaniard, let alone a Spanish Performer. It is also known that the costume for this particular painting is taken from Manet's costume collections. It might also be a jab on fake competence and the death of expertise on the internet, as the left-handed sitter portrayed in this painting holds a guitar strung for a right-handed player. His grip on the chord bar shows that he might not be familiar with the instrument.<sup>20</sup>

Other artworks in this series highlight the presence (and their distaste) of noise and info-pollution in today's age through scribbles and scratches of paint taking over the otherwise orderly painting. '(Un)seen #8' shows inscriptions repeated from Rosit's other paintings, 'Too Bad to be True #1' and 'Too Bad to be True #3'. This repetition is done as a metaphor of the character of info-pollution and noise, redundant repetition, often to the point that the meaning of the word becomes lost.

Rosit collects disjointed fragments from varying concepts surrounding him, collaging it together into a narrative that is personal and sensible to him. Detached from its original context, the criteria for selection of these ideas are what the artist personally relates to or reminded of, without much regard to the original intended meaning. It is done in a process similar to free association, which involves the unconscious. Rosit's process of idea-collage is parallel with the internet remix culture. The remix culture, in my opinion, is a defence mechanism that the creative and sentient human mind has towards the increasingly passive modes of media and culture consumption.

## WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

The word search puzzle aesthetic in many of Rosit's painting series mirrors the behaviour in remix culture and media info-pollution. Amidst rows of alphabets, the player searches to spot words — a sequence of alphabets that has meanings to them—, leaving the non-words behind. Rosit's word search puzzle contains words in both English and Bahasa Indonesia. This adds another layer to the concept of relation-based selection. For Non-Bahasa speaker, the words in Bahasa does not relate to them, it does not contain meaning for and therefore marked as non-word, and vice versa.

In Rosit's paintings, there appear sentences that are odd yet contextually understandable. There are also 'almost-words'; jumbles of alphabet possessing enough semblance to remind us of a specific idea. Almost-words appear in *'Too Bad to be True #1'* (DONGEN - DONGENG meaning fairytale) as shown in the diagram below and also few other paintings. The painting *'Too Bad to be True #2'* has an almost-word 'FILLIWIRS' appearing right next to two adjoining words 'HATERS' and 'AND'. Our English-language-programmed brain would be inclined to 'autocorrect' the almost-word 'FILLIWIRS' into 'FOLLOWERS', creating the familiar phrase of 'HATERS AND FOLLOWERS'.



Z B **B E L I E V E** U ~~M Y~~ S U  
 X M J ~~D O G~~ O V E H G H F Z  
 O **M I R I S** V Q X R **T O P** P  
 D F **D O N G** E N L **F I T** F W  
 A C D G H K L S M N V I X Z  
**M O M** U I ~~C L E A V E R~~ I U  
 J K J J M N J H I F O I X L  
**C A R A M E N J A D I S H I**  
~~T H A N~~ D I V V Z V Z O P R  
 D T X N I **I N I S A M P A H**  
 I L X C L F I S F D ~~Y O U~~ X  
 R **L E L U C O N** A I J K H F

Transcription of *Too Bad to be True #1*

Gressed: Words marked by Mulyadi  
 Red: Uncrossed English words  
 Blue: Indonesian words  
 Underlined: Almost-words

'MY DOG IS CLEAVER THAN YOU' barely makes sense as a sentence and might seem to be suffering from a bad case of a typo, except this is not a sentence at all, let alone a grammatically correct one. In reading Rosit's artwork, we should not forget that the painting is emulating a word search puzzle. The crossed words might seem to be the 'correct' answer for the puzzle, but they are actually just fragments of ideas that make sense to Rosit and remind him of a particular personal narrative. As seen in the diagram above, there are, in fact, other words in English and Bahasa Indonesia that could be strung together into a legible sentence. In the letter sequence M I R I S, Bahasa Indonesia speaker will see the word 'Miris'(pity/pitiful), whereas the English speaking audience will see the word 'Is'. As the audience of Rosit's paintings, we are welcomed to explore other configurations of meanings, linking the words we select with the subject in the painting through free association.

Rosit selects his original artwork references based on personal meaning-making, impression and association, rather than the study of what it symbolizes. In result, Rosit's paintings have a wide range of different proximity in terms of context and concept towards the original painting. While several of Rosit's paintings present strong parallelism with the original reference, the similarity might be accidental, since many images have strong and universal connotations. That being said, some of the appropriated paintings hold no similarity in context whatsoever with the original painting.

'The Black Brunswicker' by John Everett Millais tells the story of a woman trying to forestall her lover's departure for war.<sup>21</sup> This painting was taken apart down to its compositional elements, a male-female couple and a dog within an indoor/domestic setting. These three elements then serve a new, totally different narrative in Rosit's 'Too Bad to be True #1'. In a conversation, the artist reveals that this painting depicts the humiliation of a failed husband, a story that circulates

within Rosit's locale. Said husband did not manage to provide for his family or sustain their livelihood. A remark was then uttered that even the family dog has more use in guarding that family than the husband. The word 'CLEAVER' was then chosen as a pun because of its symbol of domesticity and proximity with the word 'CLEVER'.

If we squint hard enough, maybe we could conjure up a contextual link between 'The Black Brunswicker' and 'Too Bad to be True #1', something along the line of the domestic role and so on so forth. But the real connection between the two stories, in fact, lays in the naive, surface and seemingly unsophisticated interpretation.

The depth of this series depends on its participatory characteristic, just like the remix culture itself. Each viewer contributes to an active role of depicting and modifying the meaning of the painting, reappropriating an already appropriated artwork. Different educational and cultural backgrounds unveil particular meaning and conceal the other. Having a proficient knowledge in classical art might open one to understand a certain irony in Rosit appropriation art while missing the more local, spontaneous and surface association with the everyday experience entirely.

## PRIDE AND SHAME

On subsequent discussions, it becomes apparent that Rosit's artworks extend its concerns to far more than just issues that reside within the cyberspace. It investigates deep into parallel and related sociopolitical matters in real life. To understand this aspect in Rosit's work, we need to look into the concept of self-feeling in the Looking-Glass Self theory. There are two main self-feelings that result from receiving or even imagining the judgement from others: Shame or Pride, with the addition of embarrassment and humiliation.<sup>22</sup> These reactions are "proofs of compliance to social convention and loyalty towards a social organization."<sup>23</sup>

Each behaviour does not result in a constant and specific self-feeling. Pride and Shame are felt by a person relative to whom they interact with or imagine.

"We are ashamed to seem evasive in the presence of a straightforward man, cowardly in the presence of a brave one, gross in the eyes of a refined one and so on. We always imagine, and in imagining share, the judgments of the other mind. **A man will boast to one person of an action—say some sharp transaction in trade—which he would be ashamed to own to another.**"<sup>24</sup>

The feeling of pride or shame is not related to objective morality, but rather a matter of being attuned. When the self and other(s) are mutually attuned, both will feel the sense of pride for conforming with the social convention. But if the person and other(s) are not attuned, self-feeling such as shame, embarrassment, and humiliation will be generated in one or both parties.<sup>25</sup> The failure to attune to others can result in the feeling of shame/mortification despite one's innocence. In reverse, one could feel pride despite committing a morally ambiguous act as long as they are attuned with the others that they are socially in contact with.

“...the individual may come to feel ashamed of a well-intentioned honest act merely because the context of its performance provides false impressions that are bad. In this way it is possible for all of us to become fleetingly for ourselves the worst person we can imagine that others might imagine us to be.”<sup>26</sup>

‘Too Bad to be True #2’, is a case example where a victim is struck with the feeling of shame while being relatively innocent. This painting is an appropriated version of ‘Comtesse d’Haussonville’ portrait by Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres. The face of Mme Haussonville is blurred from the eyes up. Rosit reproduced the painting in a relatively faithful fashion, aside from the word search puzzle and scribbles here and there. We could see the distinct features of the original art, the elongated and mispositioned arm laid on top of the model’s midriff, her demure smile, a mirror and various ornaments at the background.

Somewhat distinct from the previous word search puzzles, this painting presents more legible words and very little non-words. These words even form coherent phrases, such as ‘Too Fast Too Serious’, and some familiar catchphrases: ‘Next-door’, ‘Conflict Addict’, ‘Haters and Followers’ and ‘Followers Rules’. Stencilled above the word search puzzle is a stamped advertisement saying ‘Telat Bulan?’ (Translate: Missing your period?) followed by a phone number to contact—a vernacular visual pollutant to the Indonesian eyes.

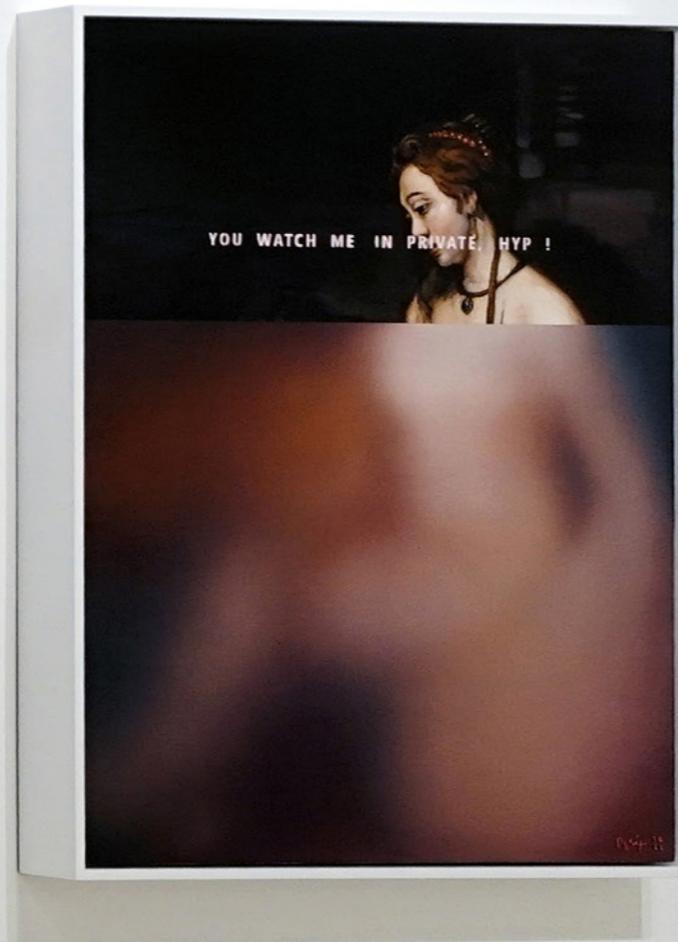
The inclusion of Telat Bulan advert prompts me to ask Rosit if this work has a particularly personal significance relating to his life. To provide context, Telat Bulan brochure pasted in public spaces could be interpreted as merely an advertisement for the period regulating traditional medicine, but it is often not the case. Instead, this phrase is a euphemized advertisement for abortion services, something that is seen as taboo in the Indonesian context. Rosit spoke to me that this artwork is created for someone close to him. She is a

F A G T H E J A S J U S T T T T Z  
 F O L L O W E R S R U L E S Z Z  
 L I K E C O N F L I C T Z A D D I C T  
 E X H U M A N E X T D O O R  
 T R U S T T R A S H T R A S H H  
 Y Y O U L I C K T H E E D I G G  
 X X T H E I H N D O N E S I A M X  
 A H A T E R S A N D F I L L I W I R S  
 Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z O N K K  
 T O O F A S T T O O S E R I O U S

Transcription of Too Bad to be True #2

Orange: Words marked by Mulyadi  
 Red: Unmarked English words  
 Blue: Indonesian words  
 Underlined: Almost-words





in anatomically uncanny portraits.<sup>30</sup> The last two points accurately symbolize the unrealistic ideal held against women, to always be poised and refined while at the same time fit into an anatomically impossible beauty standard.

Inversely both *'Bethsabée au bain tenant la Lettre de David'* (Bathsheba at Her Bath or Bathsheba with King David's Letter) by Rembrandt and Rosit's appropriated version in *'Hyp!'* Shows an instance where one could feel genuine pride despite being ultimately corrupt. In this painting, the Bathsheba figure is blurred from shoulders to toe with an inscription 'YOU WATCH ME IN PRIVATE, HYP!' across her face; 'hyp' being the abbreviation for 'hypocrite'. This artwork is also one of the few appropriations in the series that shares a very similar contextual background with its original painting, in this case, religious hypocrisy.

In the biblical story, David chanced upon Bathsheba bathing by accident. He saw that she is comely and proceed to lay with her in private, with full knowledge that she is the wife of one of his own men. She subsequently becomes pregnant with his child and David proceed to scheme a battle that would kill Uriah, her husband, indirectly murdering him.<sup>31</sup>

David manages to preserve his feeling of pride despite committing such an act that is against his morality. This is because of David's position as the King, Bathsheba and Uriah's judgement towards him hold little to no effect in influencing his self-idea as a powerful and righteous person. Because of this power difference as well, David did not see Bathsheba as a witness to his crime. His action was done in private. As briefly discussed in the case of *'Telat Bulan?'* advertisement that secrecy could salvage one's pride, the media occasionally spurs

movements fighting against injustice, but it is only done once the injustice becomes public. Plight against private, un-broadcasted injustice is as good as nonexistent.

“Second, the enforcement of social norms: by exposing moral stands, the media can spur organized action. Deviations, sometimes of a gross nature, may—in fact, do— take place, but it is not until they are made public that concerted action against them takes place.”<sup>32</sup>

It was not until the prophet Nathan reprimanded him that he realized his hypocrisy. Nathan told the story of a poor farmer whose sole lamb was taken away from him by a prosperous man, who already had many lambs of his own. David was strongly angered by this metaphorical rich man, demanding severe punishment, not realizing the irony. Characterized as a righteous person, his act is evidently against his own standards of justice, but how was he able to isolate this action from affecting his own self-idea?

Rosit's *Bathsheba* is a jab against the religious mass organization in Indonesia. The mass organization, or more familiarly addressed as Ormas, have been covering, demanding demolition, and protesting against figurative public sculptures in Indonesia, especially ones that depict the female body.<sup>33</sup> This is supposedly done because these sculptures infringe upon religious values in Indonesia. They claim that their actions are to preserve the morality of the people. Yet, Rosit doubts that they are so saintly that they don't partake in looking at the naked female bodies through their phone screens in the privacy of their homes.

The public-self is starkly different than the cyber-self and private-self. The multiple selves possess multiple moral standards that do not cross each other's realm. The outward act of righteousness preserves one's pride with all the 'good' points tallied on the public-self. Their action in private, lacking any form of judgement, does not result in shame because there is no mis-attunement against anyone. The failure in recognizing the irony in their public versus private actions is what creates this hypocrisy.

The interconnectedness brought upon by social media and the internet does not automatically mean that one will be more open in exposing themselves to new ideas—it is instead the opposite. The abundance of contents and the ability to choose between them creates an enclosed bubble inhabited by like-minded individuals.<sup>34</sup> Everyone can present the most ideal versions of themselves, thanks to the anonymity of cyber-persona, creating a collective opinion that is detached from reality and self-awareness. This enclosed community lacks outward critique and peer review about their opinion and behaviour. Highly attuned with each other, these groups feel the utmost sense of justification and pride. Their unpoliced self-justified opinion and hypocritical moral standards are subsequently imposed on others in real life, creating unfair scrutiny against the innocent, such as the girl in *'Too Bad to be True #2'*.

As a counterpart for *'Hyp!'*, *'Sumbang #2'* is Rosit's appropriation of *'Le Déjeuner sur l'herbe'* (*Luncheon on The Grass*) or also known as *'Le Bain'* (*The Bath*) by Edouard Manet. *'Luncheon on The Grass'* is a seminal work in discussing the difference between passive nakedness and alert nakedness, criticizing the hypocrisy of the Paris upper-class. Bathsheba was seen nude by King David, she was unaware that her nakedness had become public. She was in a state of absorption and her gaze away from the audience. On the other hand, the naked female in Manet's painting stares back to the direction of the audience beyond the canvas, challenging the gaze. *'Luncheon on The Grass'* insults the image of passive, idealized, and semi-pornographic nakedness that hypocrites often enjoy in secrecy or with the alibi of beauty and sophistication with the crude, realistic, alert, ungentrified nakedness.

This complementary pairing also exists between *'Hyp!'* and *'Sumbang #2'*. Where in *'Hyp!'* Rosit mockingly follows the demands of the hypocritical mass organization while at the same time questioning their integrity, in *'Sumbang #2'* Rosit chooses to not conceal the body, but rather accentuate its presence; intentionally testing the level of moral discomfort allegedly brought about by the bare female body, replying the gaze.<sup>3</sup>

## THE COLLECTIVE-SELF AND NYIA FARMLAND EVICTION

There are some artworks in this series that especially talk about a particular case of injustice against farmers and their lands in Kulon Progo, Yogyakarta. In late 2017, hundreds of Kulon Progo residents were force-evicted by authorities.<sup>36</sup> Their properties, which were later claimed to be a disputed land, are to be transformed into the New Yogyakarta International Airport.

Phrases such as “OLADALAH DIGUSUR LAGI DIPUKUL MUNDUR DI TANAH SENDIRI HOBBY PUKUL HOBBY SIAPA” (Translation: evicted again pushed back again in one’s own land, beating (is) a hobby, whose hobby [is it]?) in ‘*Sumbang #1*’, and “KOALISI MAKI SANA MAKI SINI, KUASA GUSUR SANA GUSUR SINI” (Translation: coalition of cursing here and there, the power to evict here and there) in ‘*Too Bad to be True #4*’, clearly shows a political injustice happening and a distaste and distrust towards the authority. However most of the message was shown through the scribbles and stencilled words, not so much through the subject of the painting.

The artwork ‘*Too Bad to be True #3*’ is a modification of Andrea Mantegna ‘*St Sebastian*’ of Louvre. Unlike the two artworks mentioned above, this artwork speaks of the eviction incident through some visual elements in the painting, including the subject matter and setting. St Sebastian became a martyr after he was executed for defending his faith and reprimanding the cruelty of the Roman emperor. Mantegna portrays the martyr tied up against Corinthian pillars with city ruins as the backdrop. In Rosit’s version, St Sebastian’s face is pixelated. The artistic choice could allude for two things. Firstly, the pixelation transforms Mantegna’s St Sebastian into a collective symbol of all Kulon Progo evictee. Secondly, the face being obscured welcomes the audience to project themselves into the suffering of St Sebastian, and in combination with the stencilled words, the pain of farmers in Kulon Progo.

Rosit believes that the Looking-Glass Self concept that he uses as the theoretical basis for his paintings are not limited to individuals. It applies to communities as well in the form of



collective-selves. According to Cooley, the self manifests itself in the form of ownership of object, power, admiration, idea. At the same time, the self is also a territory, and proclamation of existence to the general public.<sup>37</sup> The self could also be assigned to inanimate objects, for example, in phrases such as “I’m below the bulls-eye”, the dart player marks the dart as an extension of his I-territory.<sup>38</sup> In this case, for the farmers in Kulon Progo, their lands and their community are the extensions of themselves.

What happens to the feeling of their self-worth, when part of their collective-selves was disrespected and violated by the authority?

## A SCANNER DARKLY

he title of this exhibition is taken from Phillip K. Dick dystopian novel and film adaptation, 'A Scanner Darkly'. The decision came to be not because there is a direct conceptual relation between Rosit's paintings with the book but because there are impressions and loose associations that remind one of the other. Substance - D, the fictional psychoactive drug that slowly splits the personality of its user, is eerily similar in nature with social media, the most potent social narcotics. Or what about the scramble suit and its real-life counterpart: internet anonymity? Maybe the allegory between these elements is not what was initially intended by both Phillip K. Dick or Rosit, but I wish to borrow it. I want to remix it with my impressions of these paintings and the issues they carry, which is the anxiety of realizing that our view of our own identity is slowly getting murkier and darker.

Lastly, as a disclaimer, this exhibition and writing are not trying to hinder the progress that is brought upon our civilization by the internet and digital revolution. It is much more akin to a personal expression of frustration than a structured politicized critique towards society. In holding this exhibition, we are hoping to bring attunement between everyone that is experiencing the franticness of being drowned in constant noise, info-pollution, loss of identity and threat of disruption. We hope to reassure that this confusion is not on them, not because of their incompetence, but rather merely the syndrome of this era.

**LIZA MARKUS**



**Liza (Lija) Markus** (b.1995) is an Indonesian art practitioner that was trained as a sculptor in Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, Singapore. She spent her teen years in a Catholic all-girls school, sculpting various props for her school theatre corps and performing as a traditional musician in the Indonesian National Orchestra. These pastimes that she did more seriously than her school work solidified her decision to pursue sculpture major; a decision she was able to get by threatening her family that she will instead become a priest if they did not let her study Fine Arts. Her artworks express her ideas about shared human emotions through sculptures, installations, writings and textile arts.

Only genuinely interested in either art, tradition, or religion,—but has since taken a more cynical view on all three— her artworks obsess over the theme of religious masochism, guilt, and traces of postcolonial hybrid cultures in Southeast Asian Christian and Catholic rituals.

In recent years, she has been exploring a more managerial and curatorial role in the exhibition-making process. She writes egoistically and often fails to let go of her artist “pants” even when performing curatorial positions. She has since relocated to Jakarta, Indonesia from Singapore, and help organize several exhibitions and residencies including “Inikah Rasanya...(Neraka)/ Is This How It Feels...(To be in Hell)” with Salihara and Arcolabs, a residency combined with exhibition and performance art event “Making Sense of a Tiger Attack” in collaboration with Studio Batur Bandung, “A.Void” and “Orthodox” with therightbelief, Singapore, and “Conversation on Lack and Excess” with Gajah Gallery, Yogyakarta.

#### ENDNOTES

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