

IN THE
**SHADOWS
OF VOLCANOES**

Celebrating artistic freedom in Indonesia

March 27 – June 6, 2004



Produced by the
Mennonite Heritage
Centre Gallery



THE PROVINCIAL MUSEUM OF ALBERTA

Alberta
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



News Release – March 23, 2004

The Provincial Museum unveils two exhibitions celebrating East Indian and Indonesian artisans

Edmonton... The Provincial Museum of Alberta presents two new exhibitions that explore important social and cultural themes while celebrating the strength of the human spirit through art. *In the Shadows of Volcanoes* and *Through the Eye of the Needle: Stories from an Indian Desert* will be on display at the Museum from March 27 to June 6, 2004.

In the Shadows of Volcanoes reveals some of the hope, diversity and mystery of Indonesia through 57 magnificent works by 31 artists. The exhibition was originally produced by the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Explore the struggle for independence through art as the women of the Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan co-operative in India share their stories and craft in *Through the Eye of the Needle: Stories from an Indian Desert*. This vibrant collection of 98 embroideries, numerous photographs, and a video presentation explores the themes of poverty alleviation, women's empowerment and sustainable economic growth through a co-operative. *Through the Eye of the Needle* was originally produced by the Vancouver Museum.

A parallel exhibition featuring the works of the Edmonton Needlecraft Guild will be on display in the Museum's *Café Cases*.

The Provincial Museum of Alberta is located at 12845-102 Avenue in Edmonton. For further information, phone (780) 453-9100 or visit our Web site at www.pma.edmonton.ab.ca.

Note to editors: *In the Shadows of Volcanoes* and *Through the Eye of the Needle* will open with a media event starting at 10:30 a.m. on Friday, March 26, 2004.

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Exhibition Overview

The exhibition offers visitors a chance to explore the heritage of a country with the world's largest Muslim population at a time when such cross-cultural understanding is so vitally needed. As such, the exhibition will expose visitors to some of the contours of Muslim life, as well as reflecting the interaction between Islam and other religious traditions – Christianity and Hinduism – in Indonesia. Visitors will have the opportunity to consider the parallels between the cultural and religious diversity of Indonesia and that of Alberta.

Thoughts from Ray Dirks, Curator Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg

Indonesia, a giant archipelago; a 5,000 kilometer long chain of islands sweeping through southeast Asia; a wondrous mixture of history, cultures, traditions and religions; the fourth most populous country on earth.

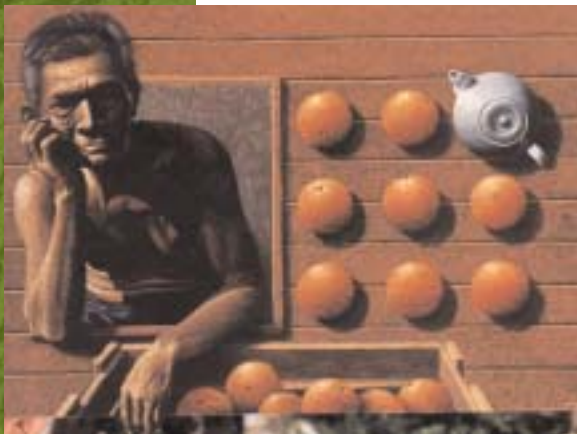
Art from across the country; from Sumatra to Java to Bali to Maluku to Kalimantan to Timor; radiating out of the cultural hub, Yogyakarta; revealing the diversity, cultures and thought of modern Indonesia.

*Volcanoes; more than 120 on the island of Java alone; more than 30 still active; people in the shadows of volcanoes, real and man made, in a complex, sometimes troubled nation. **In the Shadows of Volcanoes** reveals Indonesia through the eyes of its artists in a way never before seen in North America.*

Visitors to the gallery will encounter:

- 57 contemporary works representing 31 different artists

By reflecting both the deep sorrows and terrors of Indonesian life and the creativity, hopes and beauty of this culture, *In the Shadows of Volcanoes* will introduce Albertans to the wonders of Indonesia.



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In the Shadows of Volcanoes *Fact Sheet:*

- Yogyakarta, called Yogya by locals, is on the island of Java in Indonesia.
- It is surrounded by the Menoreh Mountain range and shadowed by the active volcano Mount Merapi. Merapi is 2,914 m above sea level.
- The predominant faith is Muslim and the main language is Javanese.
- Yogyakarta Special Region is a self-governing district given provincial status in 1950 in recognition of its important role in fighting for independence, and is responsible directly to the government in Jakarta.
- Once the capital of Indonesia, Yogya was the base for revolutionary forces against the Dutch during occupation.
- It is considered to be the core of Indonesian culture and history, and is also called the University City because of its numerous universities and academies which accommodate students from across Indonesia and abroad.
- Yogya is also known as the heart of traditional and modern arts in Indonesia.
- Alive in Yogyakarta today are: full Gamelan orchestras, classical and contemporary Javanese, wayang kulit - leather puppet theatres - and hundreds of other traditional illustrations of art.
- ASRI, the Academy of Fine Arts, is the centre of arts in the region and Yogyakarta itself has given its name to an important school of modern painting in Indonesia, perhaps best illustrated by the renowned impressionist, the late Affandi.
- The area's earliest recorded history dates from the 9th century, which was then dominated by Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms that built the magnificent temples such as Prambanan, Borobudur and Ratu Boko.
- The Buddhist Temple of Borobudur was built between 750 and 850 AD and is located 40 km north west of Yogya
- Wali Songo (Nine Saints of Islam) were the Muslim missionaries responsible for spreading the Islamic faith influencing the Javanese religion and culture of today.



Q & A with Ray Dirks, Curator, Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg

Where and when was this exhibition created?

This exhibition comes out of contact between myself and Abang Rahino a few years ago. Abang is the son of Sudjojono, the father of contemporary Indonesian art. Abang had heard of my work with artists from the Global South and contacted me to talk about Indonesian art and the role of his father, who passed away some years ago. I kept that conversation in the back of my mind for about a year.

In 2001, I was readying to travel to Asia to begin the two-year process of bringing together another exhibition featuring art and daily-life photographs from 17 countries, titled *In God's Image*. I reconnected with Abang to see if he could help with contacts in Indonesia for the exhibition, and we decided that, if I would be in Indonesia anyway, we should also work on bringing together a specifically Indonesian exhibition. As Sudjojono's son, Abang was able to open many doors for me. We visited with gallery directors and curators in Jakarta and then formed a partnership with arts organizations in Indonesia's cultural and artistic capital, Yogyakarta. Our partners recommended artists and their specific artworks, and 59 pieces were accepted for inclusion in the exhibition. The exhibition began its tour in summer 2002.

How were you impacted by your trip to Indonesia?

I traveled to the island of Java in August/September 2001. I was interested in exploring the cultural and artistic diversity of the country. Indonesia is known as the largest Muslim country in the world and there has been a significant amount of religious and ethnic tension in various parts of the country. I was looking to see beyond these known facts to where the majority of people exist. The country is the largest majority Muslim country in the world but it also includes millions of non-Muslims. The majority, whether Muslim or otherwise, are simply decent people wishing to forge as good a life as they can for themselves and their families. I hoped that the art in the exhibition would reflect the incredible diversity of the country and offer a positive image of its beautiful peoples and cultures.

Describe your role in the development of this exhibition.

I am the curator of the exhibition. I suggested in conversation with Abang Rahino that we put together a purely contemporary exhibition of Indonesian art. We had first discussed an historical perspective that would include his father. In the end, we agreed to do something completely contemporary, which has never, according to several Indonesian sources, been organized in North America. I travelled together with Abang to form partnerships with various organizations and to make our plans known in Indonesia. I then had Indonesians suggest artists to include. I committed to including at least one artwork from each recommended artist. Our Indonesian partners collected the submissions and I then selected the art from those submissions for the exhibition.

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What would you like Albertans to learn from this exhibition?

I hope people leave the exhibition feeling Indonesia is a sophisticated country with a vibrant, diverse contemporary art scene. I hope they come to realize that it cannot be branded simply as a conservative Muslim country, but is one that includes a vast diversity of peoples. This is an opportunity to see a country most of us know little about through the eyes of its artists. And, according to Indonesian sources, this is the first opportunity for North Americans to do so through contemporary art.

Have you had any interesting experiences in the exhibition's development that you'd like to share?

I, apparently to Indonesians, bear a striking resemblance to the leader of East Timor, named Gusmão. East Timor was in the last throes of separating from Indonesia after a long and bloody struggle when I arrived at the Jakarta airport. Abang Rahino was there to pick me up and he agreed to have a sign ready with my name on it, since we had never met before. My flight arrived from Taiwan and I was the only Westerner on the flight. Abang watched the people coming out of customs. He saw nobody from Canada, or so he thought, and put his sign down. He was flabbergasted that Gusmão was coming to Jakarta without bodyguards. But it wasn't Gusmão, it was me. Finally, after noting there certainly were no other Caucasians on the flight Abang took a closer look at me, decided I wasn't Gusmão and again held up his sign.

As we toured Java, several times Abang pretended with others that I was Gusmão. Usually he would wait until I was a little ways away and then he would whisper to whomever I had just been talking to, "do you know who that was?" I'd look back and see people's jaws dropping. Eventually, Abang decided that he should stop pretending I was Gusmão because it could perhaps lead to real trouble at some point.

Seriously, I was most impressed at the attitude of artists I met, Muslim and otherwise, and how they want to be a positive force for good, for reconciliation and tolerance in their troubled country. They also want to help foster a better and truer image of Indonesia in North America. As a result, everywhere I went, I was met with open arms and great willingness to co-operate.



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*Profile: Ray Dirks, Curator,
Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg*



Ray Dirks grew up in British Columbia's Fraser Valley. After taking the Art in Merchandising program at Vancouver Community College, he and his wife, Katie, travelled to Latin America for several months in 1978. Dirks' goal was to meander towards Machu Picchu, the lost city of the Incas in Peru, to see an historic site he had dreamt of visiting since childhood. The ruins met his every expectation, but what intrigued him more were the ordinary people he met along the way. A stint as an illustrator for two years in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, cemented his interest in peoples of other cultures, especially coming from places we tend to know little about or stereotype in negative ways.

Dirks moved to Winnipeg in late 1985 and began a freelance career as an artist and curator. In 1998, he became the director of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery in Winnipeg where he has continued with an international focus in his own art and the exhibitions he curates. Dirks has worked with artists from 30 countries and curated exhibitions that have toured throughout the U.S. and Canada and in Africa and Europe. Three exhibitions he has curated (from Indonesia, Cuba and Sudan) have included stops in lower Manhattan in their tour schedules. His latest, *In God's Image* (an exhibition of art and daily life photographs from 17 countries around the world), is in the early stages of a European tour.

Dirks is also known for his own watercolour paintings of people from the Global South. He has had solo exhibitions of his artworks in Canada, the U.S. (including at Yale University), Cuba and Ethiopia. In 2002, he was invited to be a research fellow at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut as a result of his African-themed paintings. His paintings have sold as far away as South Africa and buyers include world heavyweight boxing champion Lennox Lewis.

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Acknowledgements

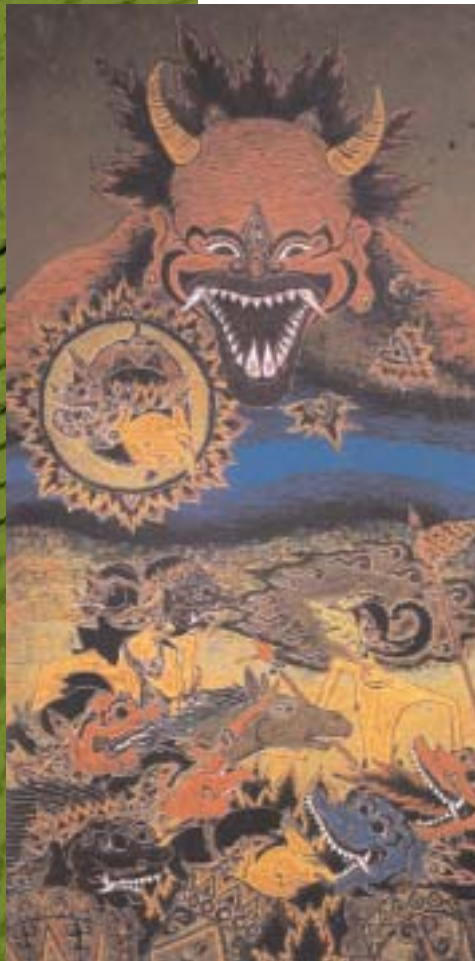
The Provincial Museum of Alberta would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for their contributions to *In the Shadows of Volcanoes*

Canada

Ray Dirks, Curator, Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg
Ten Thousand Villages Canada, New Hamburg, Ontario

Indonesia

Abang Rahino, Salatiga
Marthen Tahun, Asian Christian Art Association, Yogyakarta
Dopo Yeihan, Duta Wacana University, Yogyakarta
Apikri, Yogyakarta



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Museum Prices and Hours

Admission:

	Regular	Annual Mammoth Pass: (Unlimited Admission plus benefits)
Adult (18-64 years)	\$10	\$35
Senior (65 and over)	\$8	\$30
Student (with ID)	\$8	\$30
Youth (7-17)	\$5	\$20
Family (Two adults and children 7-17)	\$28	\$70
Grandparent (Two grandparents and children 7-17)	\$28	\$60

Hours:

Saturday to Friday: 9 am to 5 pm

Admission is half-price on Saturdays and Sundays between 9 am & 11 am

Special Presentation!

Life in the Shadows of Volcanoes (Saturday, March 27)
with Ray Dirks, Curator, Mennonite Heritage Centre Gallery, Winnipeg

Join Ray Dirks as he takes you on an enlightening trip through Indonesia! This special slide presentation will provide insights into the cultural, historic and artistic life of Indonesia.

In *The Museum Theatre* (included with regular admission)
Doors open at 1:30 pm, presentation runs from 2 pm to 3 pm, followed by a "Q & A" session and a special tour of the gallery.

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