

FERMENTED  
FEELINGS

BY IDA  
LAWRENCE

Jakarta

ART JAKARTA GARDENS

7 — 14 APR 2022

HUTAN KOTA by PLATARAN



## Brewing Stories and Feelings

Written by Bianca Winataputri

Storytelling is a central part of Ida Lawrence's artistic practice. Across her paintings, she includes texts along with excerpts from conversations with her family in Indonesia such as "Jangan lupa oleh-oleh ya." (Don't forget to bring home souvenirs); "Ayo duduk dulu sebentar. Nyantai dulu." (Sit down for a minute and relax); "Awat nanti masuk angin." (Be careful when going outside, you might catch a cold). Most of these phrases are common across families in Indonesia as gestures of love and care. These personal stories are painted on the canvas alongside images of fruits, traffic lights, boxes of gifts, family members, swimming pools, and airports in compositions that look almost dream-like, a montage of memories and imagined scenes unfolding across the canvas.

In her most recent series, *Fermented Feelings*, made at a great distance and time away from Indonesia during the pandemic and the artist's subsequent residency in Berlin, Germany, Ida shared that these paintings are about '...making connections but also revealing disconnection having time apart from Indonesia. It transported me but also reminded me of being so far away.' The word 'transport' speaks strongly to experiences of flashbacks or flashes of memories. She recounted that the prominent green colours in Alexanderplatz train station in Berlin reminds her of Yogyakarta and that the little things and moments in the city becomes at once familiar and unfamiliar.

The titular painting *Fermented Feelings* (2021), depicts a cardboard box with a text that reads *Salak Busuk* (rotten salak) *Cap Mbak Ida* (Mbak Ida brand) with the artist's face painted as the logo. The box resembles Indonesian souvenir food boxes wrapped in a red plastic ribbon referred to as *tali raffia*. In the painting, she narrates an experience where she went to buy oleh-oleh or souvenirs in the form of *Salak* (snake fruit) from Bali to her family in Yogyakarta. However, by the time she gifted the souvenir the fruits were already rotten. This awkward encounter is retold in the painting in a way that makes it difficult to read, with texts written backwards and the colours blending in with the snake fruit patterns that mushroomed across the canvas. The texts are at once there and disintegrate as we follow them.

When viewing Ida's paintings, we are invited to her personal space and stories, her doubts and confessions. In *I want but yeah also* (2021), the artist shared the many encounters she had during her time in Indonesia and her inner thoughts/responses to them:

I want to pay the cheapest price for mangosteen in the market  
but yeah I also want to drink a cappuccino every morning in the  
'tourist cafe' across the road.

manjanyaaaa (you loveee being pampered)

I want my neighbours to look out for me  
but yeah I also want to come and go as I please without having to  
explain myself.

mau ke mana mbak? (where are you going?)

I want to join buka puasa (fast breaking during Ramadan)  
but yeah I also want to eat throughout the day.

mens ya mbak? (are you on your period?)

I want my aunties and uncles to treat me the same way they treat  
their other keponakan  
but yeah I also want to dodge being asked when I'm getting  
married.

The work speaks to the conflicting position of being in-between cultures and generations where we at once want to respect traditions, customaries, and rituals, but also want to have more agency towards what we do and who we become.

Other uneasy and awkward experiences are explored in *Can't Jongkok* (2021). 'Can't jongkok [squat] for shit', reads the work that depicts a precariously squatting figure in a blue tiled space reminiscent of many kamar mandi — toilets and bathrooms — across Indonesia. The blue tones in this work also appears in *Livelihoods* (2021) but set against a rather contrasting story. Here Ida paints a scene from a lavish swimming pool in Bali with reflections of palm trees, colourful cocktails, pineapples, and a Justin Bieber cameo at the centre of composition referring to the pop songs that were blasting from poolside speakers.

In comparison to the rest of the works in the series and the stories/experiences they shared, *Livelihoods* reveals the artist's observations of the varying class structures and privileges in Indonesia as the painting writes 'You can reach the posh pools via a series of dirt-poor villages, shit roads and dusty shacks selling dusty packets of dust-flavoured junk food.' From squat toilets to posh pools, conflicted feelings of comfort and discomfort seems to be a recurring motif across the series.

Patterns and repetitions of images are also key elements in Ida's painting, which deteriorate in a similar way to the texts. In *Good intentions* (Mau beli oleh-oleh untuk tante) (2021) and *san du ta ma* (2021) the artist repeatedly painted of box of fruits and fans in the latter that subsequently disintegrates into its contours. In a recent conversation, Ida shared that her process when making these works was to refer to the previous image she painted and that the decay of the image was to highlight the human touch. There is a sense of humanity, that the painting is made by a human with all its imperfections which was something that the artist enjoys and wants to share with everyone. The use of repetition also reminds us of rote learning as a process of memorising. Ida's repeated imagery can be considered as a process of recalling her memories and reconnecting to them.

In *DPS-JOG* (2021) we are presented with a bird's eye view of baggage carousels in airport arrivals with a composition that resembles an aerial view looking down from the airplane. In this work, Ida recalls her experience flying from Bali to Yogyakarta many years ago. The stories/texts are squeezed into the painting, encased in the diamond shaped pattern that multiplies across the canvas reflecting on the fleeting thoughts we would

have when waiting for our luggage or during airplane journeys. There is a sense of longing to meet family members, that is intricately explored in this work.

Other experiences may not be as clear or legible in our memories. *Good Intentions* (uncertain recollections) (2021) depicts fragments of images scattered across the surface including a bicycle disassembled into smaller pieces, nangka (jack fruit), raffia tied boxes, and crossed out images. There is also a blank blue section on the top right of the painting spilling into the centre of the composition. The work suggests that the images and stories aren't clear. They are perhaps references to people and scenes that the artist hazily remembers, memories and stories that gently disintegrate or shapeshift over time.

The breaking down of images and texts that appear across the series reminds us of the nature of memories, what we choose to remember, and what is real and imagined. Ida describes "I'm building images but at the same time allowing them to disintegrate. I'm building realities but also undermining them." There is a sense of surrender to the process, to the canvas, to the materiality of the paint, and to the artist herself when developing these works. This act of surrendering is also prominent in the process or state of fermentation, allowing for time and the decomposition of molecules and particles to take its own shape without much certainty of its outcome.

When viewing the works together, there is no progressive narrative that the artist is presenting. Rather we are offered glimpses, fragments of Ida's personal stories and memories each unique to its own time and existence. Ultimately, each painting is based on the artist's feelings when recalling specific experiences and moments of her time in Indonesia. These stories and feelings have been kept close to her, brewing, and fermenting over time as they make their way to the canvas. *Fermented Feelings* does not offer definitive answers or outcomes but rather invites us to take a step backward and surrender to the fermentation process wherever it may take us.





## ● Fermented Feelings

2021  
Acrylic on Canvas  
155 x 120 cm





## ● Fermented Feelings

2021

Acrylic on Canvas

155 x 120 cm

*I bought a box of Balinese salak — snake fruit — as a souvenir for my family in Java.*

*After returning from holidays, what I ended up gifting my dear relatives — who earlier that year had rearranged their home to accommodate me, who had fed me delicious nourishing meals, who had dropped everything whenever I needed help, who had turned up to every one of my exhibitions, who had answered my many peculiar questions, who were so patient with me when I messed up — was a large hamper of fermented salak.*

*There are numerous fermented foods in Indonesia and many of them make very special gifts. There is brem (fermented glutinous rice), terasi (fermented shrimp paste), tempe (fermented soy beans), tape singkong (fermented cassava), oncom (fermented peanut press cake), dangke (fermented buffalo milk), pakasam (fermented fish)...*

*Rotting snake fruit, however, is not a special gift.*

*Budhe, Pakdhe, maafkan saya jika ada yang kurang, ~~salak~~ salah atau difermentasi secara sengaja atau tidak sengaja.*



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## DPS - JOG

2021

Acrylic on canvas,  
diptych  
305 x 180 cm



## DPS - JOG

2021

Acrylic on canvas, dyptich  
305 x 180 cm

*I always ask for a window seat: to peer down (dan nangis) into the craters of volcanoes; to peek the blindfolded people trying to walk between banyan trees in the alun-alun (ternyata! Si pohon beringinnya meloncat ke samping!); to spot the bend in the river and the bridge at the turn-off to my grandmother's house (kiri! Saya turun di sini saja Bu Pilot). To imagine: what my aunties and uncles are doing (hari ini menjahit apa Lik? Budhe dan Pakdhe mau mampir Pakdhe di sebrang sungai ya? Jangan lupa pakai helm yaaa. Dan kencangkan tali helmnya!); what my cousins are up to (aduh Mbak gak pernah istirahat. Aku akan membayangkan momen istirahat buatmu ya. Santai dulu Mbak, tarik nafas); what my nieces and nephews are playing (lihat insekt apa di sawah? Nonton apa di TV? Bulik ganggu ya, banyak pertanyaan).*

*We land and must wait for ages for our baggage to appear. Mine is one of the very last, but I pass the time by imagining what others bring with them.*



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## Good Intentions (Mau Beli Oleh-Oleh Untuk Tante)

2021

Acrylic on Canvas  
155 x 180 cm



2021  
Acrylic on Canvas  
155 x 200 cm



## I want but yeah also,

2021

Acrylic on Canvas

155 x 200 cm

*I want to pay the cheapest price for mangosteen in the market  
but yeah I also want to drink a cappuccino every morning in the tourist cafe across the  
road.*

*manjanyaaaa*

*I want my neighbours to look out for me  
but yeah I also want to come and go as I please without having to explain myself.*

*mau ke mana mbak?*

*I want to join buka puasa  
but yeah I also want to eat throughout the day.*

*mens ya mbak?*

*I want my aunties and uncles to treat me the way they treat their other keponakan  
but yeah I also want to dodge being asked when I'm getting married.*

*Kamis Pon mungkin Pakdhe*

*I want to be a generous host  
but yeah I also want to not serve men who expect to be waited upon by a woman.*

*ambil sendiri ya Mas*

*I want the ojek driver to stop complementing my Indonesian  
but yeah I also want the taxi driver to quit telling me I speak like a seven year old.*

*mbak sudah lama di Indonesia ya*

*I want to celebrate all the religious holidays  
but yeah I also want tone-deaf men to stop doing the azan.*



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## Good Intentions (Uncertain Recollections)

2021

Acrylic on Canvas  
155 x 120 cm



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san du ta ma

2021

Acrylic on Canvas

155 x 180 cm



san tai  
du lu  
ta kut  
ma suk

(angin)

san du ta ma

2021

Acrylic on Canvas

155 x 180 cm



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## Can't jongkok

2021

Acrylic on Canvas

100 x 120 cm

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Can't jongkok  
for shit

## ● Can't jongkok

2021

Acrylic on Canvas

100 x 120 cm





● **Livelihoods**  
2021  
Acrylic on Canvas  
180 x 155 cm





## ● Livelihoods

2021

Acrylic on Canvas

180 x 155 cm

There are hot springs down there. They're very posh\*.

*\*Think vivid purple cement elephant statues spurting once-scorchingly-hot now inoffensively-warm water over their backs into a glistening tiled bath + complementary wifi (PW: yOuL00kb3aut1fuLT0dayMadam) with entrance fee + towel + romantic sunset + pisang goreng wipe grease from your mouth with carefully-origamied diamond tissues and sip ambitious blends of seasonal fruits while you float -posh*

You can reach the posh pools via a series of dirt-poor villages, shit roads and dusty shacks selling dusty packets of dust-flavoured junk food.

The pools bubble with sunburnt necks and noses, pale pale wrinkled digits, plucked eyebrows, freshly facialed chins, manicured claws, braided tentacles, and best-side-staring-into-the-distance profiles — which slip and slide and float and paddle, drift dissolve cascade and steam.

My baby nephew and I bob in a soup composed entirely of couples attached at the lips. We bob to a complex rhythm of sacred ritual singing blasting from temple speakers down the road syncopated by Justin Bieber hits blasting from poolside speakers above.

Our bobbing makes ripples which lap inappropriately on the saggy cheeks and perky nipples of strangers. The ripples make waves, the waves they build and rear and curl and oh *whoa* splash the ripped jean hot pants of a poolside recliner.



Ida Lawrence (b. 1988) is a visual artist who weaves stories through her art and education projects. Her narrative paintings combine text and images and are inspired by daily observations and personal experiences. She particularly enjoys playing with the 'visual language' of painting — how images can have multiple interpretations and how the ways a painting is made can contribute to the story being told. In other projects, Ida also collaborates with visual artists, writers, musicians, film makers and dancers — most often with Woven Kolektif.

Ida is currently based in Berlin, Germany and previously was based between Sydney, Australia and Yogyakarta, Indonesia. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Painting at the National Art School, Sydney and received First Class Honours in Sculpture in Sydney College of the Arts. Between 2010-2012 she studied dance at the Indonesian Arts Institute, Yogyakarta with the Darmasiswa Scholarship. Currently she is participating in the 2022-2023 Berlin Program for Artists and working towards new exhibitions.

## Awards & Recognition

- 2022 Berlin Program for Artist Mentorship, Berlin DE
- 2020 Best Artist nomination, with Woven Kolektif, Sydney Music, Arts & Culture Awards AU
- Education kit commission, 4A KIDS, 4A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney AU

## Solo Exhibitions / Duo Exhibitions / Collaborations

- 2021 A Bird In The Grass Is Worth A Thousand Hearts, with Caitlin Hespe, curated by Katia Hermann, Retramp Gallery, Berlin DE
- CASCADE, with Woven Kolektif, curated by Leyla Stevens, Outer Space, Brisbane AU
- Laila and the Poet: da la la la ti-ra ta, film by Jasmina Metwaly, MaerzMusik Festival for Time Issues, Berlin DE
- 2020 I Fill My Days In Other Ways, mural, StillStand initiative, Urban Spree, Berlin DE
- 2019 In Conversation: FX Harsono x Ida Lawrence, curated by Emily Rolfe & Bianca Winataputri, Fairfield City Museum & Gallery, Sydney AU
- Breathing Room, with Woven Kolektif, Cement Fondu, Sydney AU
- 2018 Jangan Lupa Bawa Oleh-Oleh Ya. Redbase Foundation, Yogyakarta, Indonesia



## Group Exhibitions (Selected)

- 2020      Buah Tangan, Art Jakarta, ISA Art + Design, Jakarta ID  
            Bara: embers, with Woven Kolektif, Bankstown Arts Centre, Sydney AU  
            INTER(SUBJECT)IVITY, ISA Art + Design, Jakarta ID
- 2019      looking here looking north, with Woven Kolektif, Casula Powerhouse Art  
            Centre, Sydney AU  
            The Essayist, curated by Jasmin Stephens, The Cross Art Projects, Sydney AU  
            Brisbane & Elsewhere Art UnTriennial, curated by Bridie Gillman, Alexander  
            Kucharski & Chloe Waters, Outer Space, Brisbane AU  
            Ecologies of Being, curated by Tanushri Saha & Naomi Segal, Kudos Gallery,  
            Sydney AU  
            4A A4, Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney AU
- 2012      15th Asian Art Biennale, Shilpakala Natioan Academy of Fine Art, Dhaka BD
- 2010      Churchie National Emerging Art Exhibition, Queensland College of Art  
            Gallery, Brisbane AU

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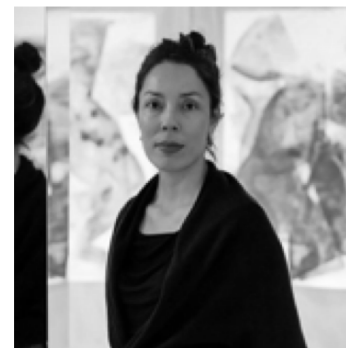
AARON TAYLOR  
KUFFNER



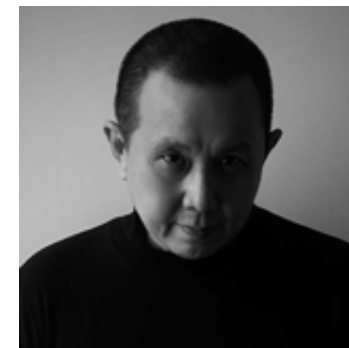
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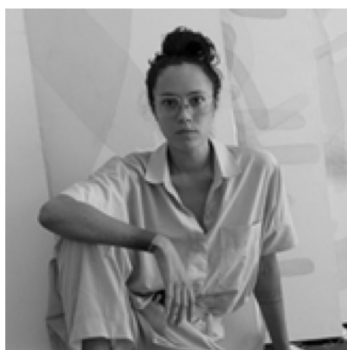
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TANTRA



YUKI  
NAKAYAMA





## ISA ART AND DESIGN

Jl. Wijaya Timur Raya No. 12  
Kebayoran Baru, 12170  
Jakarta, Indonesia

Wisma 46 - Kota BNI  
Jl. Jendral Sudirman Kav. 1  
Tanah Abang, 10220  
Jakarta, Indonesia

## CONTACT

Email: [enquiries@isaartanddesign.com](mailto:enquiries@isaartanddesign.com)  
Telephone: (+62-21) 723-3905  
WhatsApp: (+62) 811-1733-553

## VISITING HOURS

Tuesday to Saturday : 11am - 6pm