

IDA
LAWRENCE



ART SG

12 - 15 JAN 2023
MARINA BAY SANDS
SINGAPORE

FOUNDING AND
LEAD PARTNER



UBS

ISA Art
Gallery

www.isaartanddesign.com

Basa-basi is an Indonesian concept which might translate to chit-chat or small talk in English and includes phatic phrases, pleasantries and greetings. In Indonesia, where my family is from but not where I was raised, I observe these commonly spoken phrases as important threads of the social fabric: ubiquitous linguistic choreographies.

Basa-basi literally translates to 'stale language'. What is meaningful is perhaps not the words themselves but the *act* of speaking them. Their expression is a way to show care, to be polite, to acknowledge someone's presence, to make someone feel comfortable, an invitation to connect or begin a conversation.

Some common phrases and questions might seem strange or invasive in other cultures. In Indonesia though it's quite normal to ask someone you've just met, 'What's your religion?' (Agamanya apa?) or 'Are you married yet?' (Sudah menikah?) as a matter of chit-chat. When a stranger asks, 'Where are you going?' (Mau ke



Gudeg (Khas Jogja), 2022
acrylic on canvas
155 x 180 cm



*Lebaran:
Kita duduk di pinggir tikar
yang sudah penuh makanan.*

*Ratusan cemilan,
ribuan santapan
untuk 26 tamu (26 saudara).*

Bersolaman, saling minta maaf, makan-makan, berbasa-basi dan sudah saatnya untuk berpamitan. Kasihan adikku, dia deduk di pojok yang paling jauh dari pintu. Dia terpaksa ngicipi jalur — melalui rawon, lodeh, tiga piring buah dan tujuh macam keripik, krupuk dan kue — supaya bisa pamit dan berangkat ke rumah saudara selanjutnya.

Untungnya dia puasa bulan kemarin.

Loose translation:

Loose translation:
*Eid al-Fitr:
We sit on the edge of the mat
that's already full of food.*

*Hundreds of snacks,
thousands of meals,
for 26 guests (26 relatives)*

Shaking hands, asking for forgiveness, eating, chit-chatting and it's already time to say goodbye. My poor little sibling, they sit in the corner furthest from the door. They are forced to nibble their way — through rawon soup, lodeh curvy, three plates of fruit and seven types of crackers, crisps and cakes — in order to say goodbye and leave to the next relatives' house.

Luckily they fasted last month

Mats for Snacks / Snack on Mats, 2022
acrylic on canvas
155 x 180 cm

STALE

Basa-basi is an Indonesian concept which might translate to chit-chat or small talk in English and includes phatic phrases, pleasantries and greetings. In Indonesia, where my family is from but not where I was raised, I observe these commonly spoken phrases as important threads of the social fabric: ubiquitous linguistic choreographies. Basa-basi literally translates to stale language. What is meaningful is perhaps not the words themselves but the act of speaking them. Their expression is a way to show care, to be polite, to acknowledge someone's presence, to make someone feel comfortable, an invitation to connect or begin a conversation.

Some common phrases and questions might seem strange or invasive in other cultures. In Indonesia though it's quite normal to ask someone you've just met, 'What's your religion?' (Agamanya apa?) or 'Are you married yet?' (Sudah menikah?) as a matter of chit-chat. When a stranger asks 'Where are you going?' (Mau ke mana?), they would be satisfied to hear you're 'going on a walk' (jalan-jalan) or that you're headed there (Ke sana) in the direction you're pointing. Speaking too soon or directly about some topics can be considered rude or

uncomfortably abrupt, so an

exchange

of basa-basi can be a way to build rapport before speaking about deeper issues. When my aunty, who might not have seen me in a while, greets me, massages my (skinny pale) arms and exclaims,

'Wow, you're fat now!', (Wah suah gemuk!), I think 'she's just trying to say I'm looking healthy. When my uncle asks when I'm going to convert to Islam, I think he's just trying to say I'm

a very talented painter.

Basa-basi does often test my patience, though. There are only so many times in a day I can stand being asked 'Where do you come from?' (Asal dari mana?). My way to deal with the repetitive petition is to get creative and reply imaginatively or humorously. Misinterpret the question. For me, hum our functions in a similar way to basa-basi. It's an offering or an attempt to connect with someone, and can be a way to indirectly refer to or access more meaningful subjects. But in response to 'Asal dari mana?' it can be fun to be truthful and say 'Sragen' (my family's village district) then watch the stranger laugh and 'laugh at my joke'.

LANGUAGE

Stale Language, 2022

acrylic on canvas

155 x 122 cm



Basa Basi (Mau Ke Mana?), 2022

acrylic on canvas

155 x 120 cm



Basa Basi (Lagi Apa?), 2022
acrylic on canvas
180 x 155 cm

A NEW CHAPTER

At different times throughout history, the islands that make up present day Indonesia have been colonised and used as trading posts by many nations — including Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, Spain, France, Japan and Australia*. New research however reveals the region's colonised past extends much further back in time — to that of colonisation by various ancient Greek empires and city-states, from circa 450 BC until well into the first millennia AD. Evidence of this can be found in the ruins and restored remains of Greek temples — appropriated into Dutch colonial administration centres or, more recently, into shops, museums, medical clinics, homes, hotels and beauty salons.



Linguistic evidence also supports this theory of ancient interactions between Hellene colonisers and the ancestors of present day Indonesians. As this short list illustrates, the traces of undeniable cross-cultural influence and exchange remain in the modern language usage of each of the two nations.

It is therefore not surprising that certain rituals, artefacts, cuisines and cultural practices from Indonesian cultures can be found in modern day Greece.

Notable examples include:

- very large attendance of wedding ceremonies
- copper variations of *angklung*, the bamboo percussion instrument originating from West Java
- bananas
- *sambal petai* (stink bean chilli sambal) which is eaten in the northern parts of Greece close to the Bulgarian border



INDONESIAN	MODERN GREEK	ENGLISH
meta	ΜΑΤΙ (μάτι)	eye
Kepala	Κεφάλη (κεφαλή)	head
nanas	ανανάς (ανανάς)	pineapple
demokrasi	Δημοκρατία (δημοκρατία)	democracy
sekolah	σχολείο (σχολείο)	school
keramik	κεραμικός (κεραμικός)	ceramics
nama	ὄνομα (ὄνομα)	name
Sabtu	Σάββατο (σάββατο)	Saturday
plastik	πλαστικό (πλαστικό)	plastic
tomat	υπόματες (ατομάτες)	tomatoes

These Doric, Ionic and Corinthian designs — in cities and villages across the archipelago — were fashioned by the ancient Greeks in memory of their Parthenon, Temple of Zeus and Erechtheion, Indonesiaans who reside in such restored buildings must endure the malicious legacy left by these oppressors: a leaky roof during rainy season, permanently mouldy bathroom walls, and an abhorrent electricity bill due to the need to aircondition the entire building. Despite these buildings standing out like sore thumbs in the urban and rural landscapes of contemporary Indonesia, the story of ancient Greek-Indonesian interactions has surprisingly only in recent months come to the attention of archaeologists, linguists and anthropologists.



WARGA MUDA

WARGA

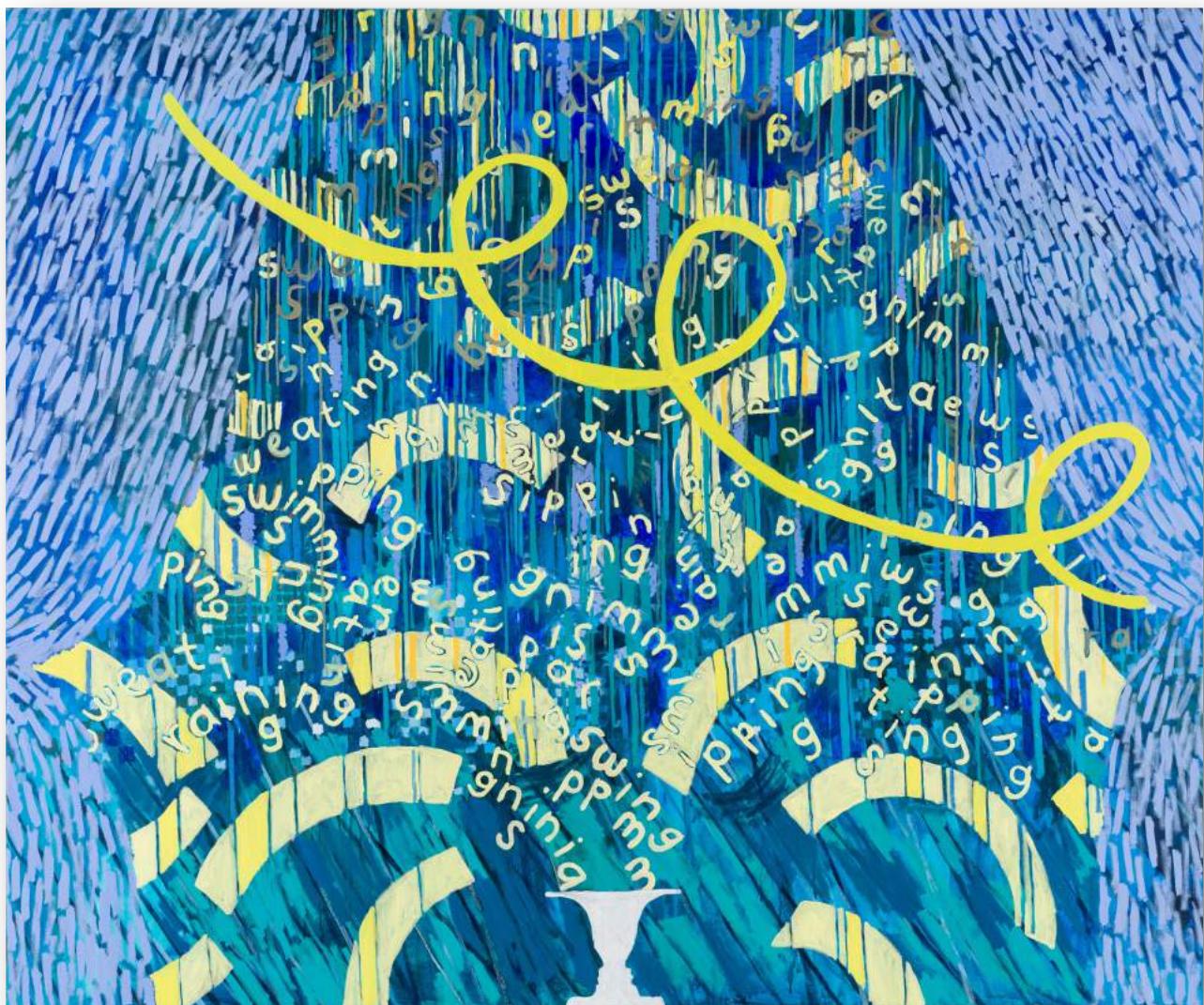


Batas Suci, 2022
acrylic on canvas
155 x 120 cm



Overlooking, 2021
acrylic on unstretched canvas,
stitching, copper pipes
220 x 192 cm

*Tropical plants
overlooking
snowy street-
scapes
wondering
where the hell they are
and what the fuck they're doing.*



Air/Air, 2022
acrylic on canvas
150 x 180 cm

Speech Acts of Ida Lawrence

Övül Ö. Durmusoglu

Language is traditionally considered to be propositional in nature and not iconic, abstracted away from any visual, spatial and motoric connotations of the corresponding experiences in the real world. The relationships between word forms and referents are largely arbitrary. Same objects may be referred with a large variation (e.g. hammer in English, martello in Italian and kakas in Hungarian), which strengthens the arbitrariness. The variations of different alphabets worldwide adds to the complex language experience. Ida Lawrence grew up mostly with English and a few phrases in Indonesian in a land where English is the official language, the language that signifies the colonisation of that land. In her work, language — spoken, written and imagined — proposes a very idiosyncratic performative agency that brings us back to J. L. Austin and his 'How to Do Things with Words' (1962) where he triggered many discussions around the non-declarative uses of language.

Lawrence's painted surfaces treat language as an image and continues to play with it alongside the depicted image. In the imageness written language becomes the mediator of proximation, intimacy and intimacy at the same time that expands the depicted scene, the association; may it be a childhood memory, fragment of an object or pieces of jackfruit. The meaning doubles, triples and quadruples sometimes in the speech acts of Lawrence. On the canvas, distances in time and space between different meanings are projected and resolved; in the act of painting, Lawrence brings memories and places close. Yet that which is untranslatable remains.

Gudeg (Khas Jogja) (2022), translating to 'Jackfruit stew (Jogja speciality)', looks like an exercise notebook of a child; a particular mantra to memorise or a story in itself. Inspired by Lydia Davis' short story 'Notes during long phone conversation with mother', the artist disintegrates the word nangka, jackfruit (depicted left hand corner) doubles it to make it plural, turns and twists it around into non-sensical syllables until it becomes kenang-kenangan (souvenirs, mementos), beside an image of Jogjakarta's speciality dish: gudeg, young jackfruit stew. Jogja was where she lived between 2010-2013, and frequently visited before moving to Berlin in 2019.

It is not a coincidence that Lawrence picks up a food element, which has the symbolic communicative power to bring communities together in Indonesian culture. Lawrence's further thoughts on the limits and beyond limits of communication is also present in Mats for Snacks / Snacks on Mats (2022) where an Eid al Fitr situation is described woven into a tikar carpet commonly found as permanent installations in Lawrence's relatives' living rooms, or unfolded for events and big gatherings. It is almost a trompe l'oeil thanks to many perspectives the artist uses, the text and images of food woven together in such a way that it is difficult to discern if things are sitting on top of a mat, or all the images are in fact a mat themselves.

How do we acquire literacy? Does being literate mean one can communicate? And is the language useful? In Stale Language (2022), Lawrence seems to design an introductory text about basa-basi, chit-chat, the particular social experience language in Indonesia. The chit-chat also creates a self reflexive space about her position to convey that experience, which bonds humans in a denser weaving. Within the painting, she notes basa-basi literally translates to 'stale language'. What starts as an information base statement changes density and form through the end, like a changing handwriting that hastens, hurries and wavers. The changing text form reminds one of the Rosetta Stone carved during the Hellenistic period in Egypt, where the top and middle texts are in Ancient Egyptian using hieroglyphic and Demotic scripts respectively, while the bottom is in Ancient Greek.

The playful Basa-Basi (Mau Ke Mana?) (2022) and Basa-Basi (Lagi Apa?) (2022) provides the rhythm of repetition in the tradition of basa-basi, chit-chat language. The questions that can be asked over and over again to familiarise can become playgrounds of displacement and replacement if one knows how to find one's way around the experience. In one, neighbouring dolphin statues inside a drained swimming pool text one another: 'Lagi apa?' ('What are you up to?') asks one, 'Mmm... tidak lagi apa-apa' ('Hmm, nothing.') replies the other. Because when there is no context of interaction and socialisation, for two fishes out of water, indeed there may not be that much to do. In the other painting, the critically endangered Bali Myna (Leucopsar rothschildi) bird — repeated a number of times — answers 'Ke sana', ('There') to the regularly repeated chit-chat question 'Mau ke mana?' ('Where are you going?'). The depicted scenes in both paintings that are in conversation with each other and Stale Language (2022), hitting on the arbitrariness of the human language and its way of socialisation that resonate in the non-human world.

A New Chapter (2022) attempts to twist the narratives of civilisation and colonisation in Indonesia by a very well-known Ancient Greek trope. This gesture parodies the way late 19th century, early 20th century pseudo archeologists projected a specific kind of ancientness into the new exoticised contexts, in the way they know best, to claim and erase the existing history. The text Lawrence brings in provides alleged evidence of Greece's colonisation of Indonesia through architectural, linguistic, and cultural 'examples' (some of which are actually true), as her way to playfully consider the narrative acts and gaps of historical storytelling. The story was inspired by the many Greek-style buildings she noticed in Indonesia and triggered a new story out of their 'out-of-placeness'. Linguistic evidence tables between Indonesian, Modern Greek and English are supplemented by archaeological 'evidence' to push the narrative further. Yet the artist is also aware there is a Batas Suci (2022), a sacred boundary around all the play. The sacred boundary physically and verbally exists on the steps of a mosque, where shoes are to be left, where the inside spiritual world is to be protected from the energies of the outside. It also signifies the culture's own self-protection and resilience mechanisms in order not to be naturalised and categorised by those that want to exoticise. The red line that continues out of the frame of the painting may continue to flow invisibly in the outer space of the painting.

Overlooking (2021) stages the current state of mind in Lawrence's life, living in Berlin, in the middle of continental Europe, far away from where she feels home. There is an inside made of tropical plants on a red background trying to relate with an outside that snows. Life brought them there, yet what are they doing there really? This is a condition not only for Lawrence but also for many artists who come from far to Berlin, where there is no sun especially in winter, to construct a new artistic life and a new network. All that is water in Air-Air (2022) opens up new possibilities and flows. Air means water in Indonesian. The acts of waters — swimming, raining, sweating, sipping — merge with each other in a disintegrated way creating a river of sounds, letters and syllables. They become a lullaby calling for a freedom in movement; which can be read as a call for new lines and forms of thinking for the artist.

'Let everything happen to you: Beauty and Terror,' Rainer Maria Rilke writes in his poem 'Go to the Limits of Your Longing' and adds 'Just keep going. No feeling is final'. The speech acts of Ida Lawrence indeed offers that space of contemplation where no feeling is final and proposes to follow an inner flow even when it is cryptic and untranslatable. Then let us allow ourselves to follow towards that place, we will all find it in different places inside and outside.

About Övül Ö. Durmusoglu

Övül Ö. Durmusoglu is a curator, writer and educator working on constructive critiques of civilization, sustainability of intersectional futures and practices of togetherness. She co-leads Art in Discourse at Braunschweig University of Art with Dr. Ana Teixeira Pinto and works as a guest professor for gender politics and aesthetics in curating at University of Fine Arts Münster. In 2022, Övül curated two major monographic exhibitions 'Portrait of a Movement' of Boudry/Lorenz in CA2M, Madrid (which travels to Tensta Konsthall in Stockholm in spring 2023) and 'Burn and Gloom, Glow and Moon: Thousand Years of Troubled Genders' of Katrina Daschner in Kunsthalle Wien. She co-edited 'Stages' with Boudry/Lorenz, their most conclusive publication up-to-date (Spector Books, 2022) and is currently working on the first monograph of Katrina Daschner. In the past, Övül was curator for steirischer herbst festival in Graz; curator/director for YAMA public screen in Istanbul; curatorial advisor for Gülsün Karamustafa's 'Chronographia' at Hamburger Bahnhof, artistic director for the festival Sofia Contemporary 2013 titled as 'Near, Closer, Together: Exercises for a Common Ground'. She curated programs within 10th, 13th, and 14th Istanbul Biennials; coordinated and organized different programs and events at Maybe Education and Public Programs for dOCUMENTA (13). During the Covid-19 pandemic, she co-initiated the neighbourhood project 'Die Balkone: Life, Art, Pandemic and Proximity' with Joanna Warsza in Prenzlauer Berg in Berlin. They co-curated a locally and internationally well received 3rd edition for Autostrada Biennale in 2021 and continue to work together for the 4th edition taking place in the summer of 2023 in Kosovo. She contributes to magazines such as Artforum Online, Spike and Frieze and various exhibition publications.

Ida Lawrence



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. Ida is selected as one of 10 participants out of 300 applicants to be a part of a 2022- 2023 Berlin mentoring program by international artist Angela Bulloch, Simon Denny and Willem de Rooij. At the end of the second year of the program, she will exhibit at KW Institute for Contemporary Art.

Education

2014	Bachelor of Visual Arts (Honours Class I), Sculpture/Installation major, Sydney College of the Arts, Sydney AU
2010	Darmasiswa Scholarship, Traditional Indonesian Dance Indonesian Arts Institute (ISI), Yogyakarta ID
2007	Bachelor of Fine Arts, Painting major, National Art School, Sydney AU

Solo Exhibitions (Selected)

2023	(Upcoming) Ida Lawrence, Art SG, ISA Art Gallery Singapore (12-15 January)
2022	Fermented Feelings, Solo Exhibition by Ida Lawrence, Art Jakarta Garden, ISA Art Gallery, Jakarta ID
2021	A Bird In The Grass Is Worth A Thousand Hearts, with Caitlin Hespe, Retramp Gallery, 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, Fairfield City Museum & Gallery, Sydney AU
	The Sound of Shadows: Interactive Journey, with Bianca Gannon, ArtPlay, Melbourne AU
	Breathing Room, with Woven Kolektif, Cement Fondu, Sydney AU
2018	Jangan Lupa Bawa Oleh-Oleh Ya, Redbase Foundation, Yogyakarta ID

Group Exhibitions (Selected)

2023	FLIGHT, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Sydney AU (January-June)
2022	Talking... And Other Banana Skins, curated by Michelle Houston, Urban Nation Museum for Urban and Contemporary Art, Berlin DE (until December 2024)
	Titik Kumpul, Art Jakarta, ISA Art Gallery, Jakarta ID
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, The Cross Art Projects, Sydney AU
	Brisbane & Elsewhere Art UnTriennial, Outer Space, Brisbane AU
	Ecologies of Being, Kudos Gallery, Sydney AU
	4A A4, Centre for Contemporary Asian Art, Sydney AU
2018	ASYIK, Indonesian Arts & Culture Festival exhibition, Addison Road, Sydney AU
2017	Woven, with Woven Kolektif, Verge Gallery, Sydney AU

Awards and Residencies

2022	Berlin Program for Artists mentorship, Berlin DE Marten Bequest Scholarship for Painting, Australia Council AU Neustart Kultur Grant, Kunstfonds, Berlin DE
2020	BBK Studio recipient, Berlin DE 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
2017	Redbase Foundation residency, Yogyakarta ID
2016	Mural commission, Glebe Chamber of Commerce, Sydney AU
2015	Sapporo Tenjinyama Art Studio residency, Sapporo JP
2014	The Demountable Studio residency, Leichhardt Council, Sydney AU
2013	Mural commission, Leichhardt Council, Sydney AU Rimbun Dahan residency, Kuang MY NSW Artists' Grant, National Association for the Visual Arts AU OYEA Cross-Artform Project Grant & Mentorship with Alan Schacher, Australia Council / Articulate Project Space, Sydney AU
2012	TeMBI Rumah Budaya residency, Yogyakarta ID
2010	First Prize, Wall2Wall Leichhardt Council Mural Competition, with Caitlin Hespe, Sydney AU Finalist, Churchie National Emerging Art Exhibition, Brisbane AU Highly Commended, Hunters Hill Art Prize, Sydney AU



CONTACT

Email:

marketing@isaartanddesign.com

deborahiskandar@isaartanddesign.com

Telephone: (+62-21) 723-3905

WhatsApp: (+62) 811-1733-553

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

VISITING HOURS

Tuesday to Saturday : 11am - 6pm