



## PRESS RELEASE

ruangrupa and Noorderlicht presents:

## THE SWEET AND SOUR STORY OF SUGAR

Exhibition of a collaborative project between ruangrupa and Noorderlicht:

### Galeri Seni Kunstkring

23 November-14 Desember 2012  
Jl. Teuku Umar No.1  
Menteng, Jakarta Pusat  
T: +62 21 3900899  
<http://www.kunstkring-jakarta.com>

### Exhibition

### Sugar Town, Inc.

Opening:  
Friday, 23 November 2012  
7 PM

With musical performance by:  
Keroncong Tugu Cafrinho

Exhibition:  
23 November - 14 December 2012  
Monday - Friday (10 AM - 5 PM)  
Saturday - Sunday (11 AM - 5 PM)

Curator: ruangrupa

In collaboration with several Jakarta based artists:  
Aprilia Apsari, Henry Foundation, Marishka Soekarna, M.G. Pringgtono,  
oomleo, Rio Farabi, Saleh Husein

Featuring works from the video workshop:

### Sugar Fiction

Workshop participants:  
Ajeng Nurul Aini, Dian Komala, Jayu Julie, Mira Febri Mellya, Nastasha  
Abigail Koetin, Raslena



## Discussion

### Sugar Stories in Indonesia

Sunday, 2 December 2012  
2 PM

#### Speakers:

Andi Achdian, Historian and editor of Loka Magazine  
Martin Suryajaya, Author on philosophy and editor [indoprogess.com](http://indoprogess.com)  
Jompert Kuswidananto, Artist

#### Moderator:

Leonhard Bartolomeus, Author and art researcher

The discussion will be held in Bahasa Indonesia and English

The exhibition and the discussion programs are open to public, free admission

For more details: [www.ruangrupa.org](http://www.ruangrupa.org) | twitter: @ruangrupa | group facebook: ruangrupa

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## Project Introduction

### THE SWEET AND SOUR STORY OF SUGAR

By means of exhibiting the collected archive of photographs and series of photography works for *The Sweet and Sour Story of Sugar* project, history of the colonial period in Indonesia is recapitulated. Noorderlicht, a leading institution of photography in The Netherlands, created the project. As a photography institute, Noorderlicht has a reputation as one of the organizations that has placed their trust in the significance of the power of photography in its ability to reflect the social actuality and to communicate critical thoughts on various levels of society.

*The Sweet and Sour Story of Sugar* is a photography investigation project, comparing the globalization process that occurs as a result of the commodification of sugar, since the beginning of the sugar industry constructions in four different countries, namely The Netherlands, Brazil, Indonesia, and Suriname. In former times, these mentioned countries were connected by colonialism, with The Netherlands as the main port in sugar trade. The outcome of this project are hundreds archives of photos on the



19th and 20th centuries of the four countries, which is then compared with series of photography works by six Noorderlicht chosen photographers, who photograph conditions of sugar industries within the four countries mentioned above during the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. The six photographers are: Tomasz Tomaszewski (Poland), Alejandro Chaskielberg (Argentina), Ed Kashi (USA), Francesco Zizola (Italy), James Whitlow Delano (USA/Japan), and Carl de Keyzer (Belgium). Each photographer depicts his own storyline from the countries they are from, for their photography works, which are thematically linked with the colonial archives. This investigative photography project reveals a complex tale of four centuries of globalization witnessed by sugar as an everyday product.

Results of this project are then preceded to be recycled into various forms of presentation, in an international collaboration with a number of art institutions in Brazil, Suriname, and Indonesia. In Brazil, the collaboration is done with WZM-Platforma Brasil Holanda in Sao Paolo; and in Suriname, the Tembe Art Studio in Paramaribo. In Indonesia, Noorderlicht collaborates with ruangrupa in Jakarta, and Langgeng Art Foundation in Yogyakarta. The photo archives are then reutilized as a new portrayal and debate, as an exhibition, publishing, public lectures, discussions, workshops, and art projects.

As curator and organizer of the project *The Sweet and Sour Story of Sugar* in Jakarta, ruangrupa develops an art project that is presented in a form of an exhibition program, complete with a video workshop program and an open discussion. For the exhibition program, the presentation from ruangrupa is emphasized on typical local approach, intimate and personal. The archives of photos is processed into a variety of consumer packaged products and souvenirs related to sugar, presented in the gallery space as merchandise in a grocery store and coffee shop called *Sugar Town, Inc.* The video workshop transforms the photography archives into works of videos and films in various methodologies, from the perspectives of each young artist involved. Meanwhile, the discussion program will examine the link between sugar with the nationalist movement in Indonesia, and its connection with the problems of nationalism in the globalisation era, of workforce, as well as the approach of artists regarding the issue.

This entire sequence of photography-based project wishes to show that there is actually a vast history that is long and intricate within the context of the on-going globalization, concealed behind the existence of sugar. Inside every particle of sugar we consume each day, millions of interpretational stories are kept hidden.



## PROGRAMS

### Exhibition

#### SUGAR TOWN, Inc.

*Sugar Town, Inc.* is a collaborative art project by ruangrupa with a number of young Jakarta-based artists, which is part of the photography project entitled *The Sweet and Sour Story of Sugar*. ruangrupa reworked the archives and photographs of the history of sugar industries and its four centuries commodification in four different countries, emphasized with typical local approach, intimate and personal.

The photo archives about the dynamics of the sugar industry in the colonial era and the present are presented in a grocery store (kiosk) and coffee shop. They are displayed as products at the store, mixed with series of illustrations inspired by the photo archives and applied to a variety of everyday products, such as cups, mugs, plates, shirts, bags, and postcards. Most products are sold, but some are distributed for free to visitors of the exhibition.

The photos selected by ruangrupa are focused on archives that represent the issues close to the problems happening in Indonesia until now; namely land and natural resources, science and technology, human resources, industrial and transportation in commerce, mobilization of human labour and its relation to global migration, cultural heritage, and patterns of people's consumption.

In addition, the research team of ruangrupa collects data on the sugar industry and all things associated with the commodification of sugar, also the stories of sugar from the homeland. These data were obtained from a variety of archival sources, including newspaper clippings, songs, movies, videos, poems, blogs, and a variety of products that contain elements of sugar in it. The photo archives with the data set found by the research team of ruangrupa are additional information and the inspiration grounds for the artists involved in this art project.

Series of illustrations and murals based on the photo archives is the works of Aprilia Apsari and Saleh Husein. This series of illustrations, along with data collected by the ruangrupa research team, are then applied to a variety of souvenirs and memorabilia products designed by Rio Farabi. Meanwhile, to give identity to the grocery store, we invite Henry Foundation to design the logo as well as a variety of applications on various products. In addition to the works of illustrations in the form of products, there are also illustrations composed in audio-visual format, and displayed as a video work. The artist Marishka Soekarna cultivates sugar issues into her daily life as an illustration, which is then processed into animated video work. The other video works are the results of the video workshop run by Mahardika Yudha. As the



coordinator of Video Art Development Division in ruangrupa, he invited six young artists to elevate the colonial photo archives into works of videos and films. The workshop is expected to produce a variety of new perspectives that will enrich the value of the photo archives. Meanwhile, the designs of the grocery store, coffee shop, and the layout of the exhibition space, are composed by the artist M. G. Pringgtono.

By presenting the exhibition in the form of daily experiences, like shopping at the store and hanging out at the coffee shop, our collective memory of how sugar has been produced and consumed - both in local and in global contexts - can be subtly recapitulated. In an easy, familiar, and warm way, all the narrations as well as the information and knowledge captured in these documentary-styled photography works are distributed to the public like a melody of a song that rings in your head or words being whispered in the ear, they will not be easily forgotten.

## Video Workshop

### SUGAR FICTION

The "*Sugar Fiction*" video workshop is a part of the historical photography-based art project entitled "*The Sweet and Sour Story of Sugar*". This workshop tries to interpret or to transcode the form of photography archive in to moving images. How the issues of social-politics, colonial, post-colonial, modernization, and technology; which are closely related with the photos of sugar factories; have been "manipulated", "reduced", or even "expunged" from its true meaning to become this new definition from the standpoint of the young generation of women, in seeing the 'moving' historical accounts.

This workshop invites six young artists whom were born more or less 25 years ago. They live and work in Jakarta, far from the colonial memories of sugar factories that existed in almost the whole of Java, the middle and the eastern parts. These artists have all got a variety of backgrounds in education; like in journalism, films, even bookkeeping. However, all these participants have made or at least have done works of art, individually as well as collaboratively, that are in connection with moving images. They will attempt to produce video works and narrative-fiction based films, music videos, investigations, documentaries, as well as performances.



## Discussion

### SUGAR STORIES IN INDONESIA

The mass sugar production in Indonesia during the Dutch Colonial era began its new phase when the Tanam Paksa (Cultivation) program was ordered in 1830. During that period of time, sugar was Java's biggest export component in the world market. As a consequent, the vast amount of stories that goes with it, starting from the tales of poverty amongst the land workers, up to historical accounts that dealt with nationalism. The story of sugar in Indonesia continues until this moment, no longer associated colonialism or nationalism, but turning more to issues of workforce and people's culture in the regions where sugar factories are running.

This program will examine the link between sugar with the nationalist movement in Indonesia, and its connection with the problem of nationalism in the globalisation era, workforce, as well as the approach of artists towards the issue.



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