Signature Work: Bandung 1994

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Writing about nationalism and the "fetish of modernity" in the Indonesian revolution, James Siegel recently reminded us that self-definition is an open-ended project fraught with confusions and contradictions. His view, as he puts it, "is contrary . . . to the stream of current thought that sees identity as achieved, negotiated, crafted, and in other ways the product of a self which, knowingly following its interests, invents itself" (Siegel 1997:9). To find a place of self-definition, says Siegel, is to be "thrown off balance" or to be "convincingly self-deceiving" (ibid). Of interest to me here are the implications of Siegel's remark for understanding some of the dilemmas of being a painter in contemporary Indonesia, especially those that might ensue when a painter's "self" becomes attached to a work of art through a signature. For me, these problems not only have to do with the contingencies and illusions of a self, but also with the social life of objects that have become entangled in assertions of self-identity. It is not just a subject that is potentially thrown off balance by the project of self-definition, but the world of social encounter in which subjects and fetishized objects dwell.

Such dilemmas are by no means unique to Indonesia's artworld; they crop up wherever the globalized art markets and art discourses we associate with modernity have put down roots. Developing a feel for the predicaments faced by contemporary

Indonesian artists for this reason won't begin with an exploration of "Javanese" or "Sumatran" views on art, or with any "premodern" native tradition. As with Indonesian writers, to be an Indonesian painter "one [has] first to feel the currents of world communication" (Siegel 1997:93). To apprehend, then, the predicaments of Indonesian artists and the art objects they produce, we need to keep the world in mind and in our ethnographic horizons. While I do not intend here an analysis or critique of commodity culture and global capitalism, this essay on the anxieties and desires surrounding the material emblems of an Indonesian artist's identity will reflect the ways in which modernity and globalization have emerged as powerful themes and organizing discourses in the revisionary project of contemporary ethnography.[1] Describing a specific culture of predicaments while keeping the world in mind means that care needs to be taken not to depict subjects and localities as social phenomena distinct from, or opposed to, the effects of globalization. As Arjun Appadurai recently has remarked, "globalization is itself a deeply historical, uneven, and even *localizing* process" (Appadurai 1996:17; emphasis in the original). Appadurai's observation demands that we not just look at how globalization takes place in locales (cf., Coombe and Stoller 1994:251; King 1991), but also at "how locality emerges in a globalized world . . . how global facts take local form" (Appadurai 1996: 18). In ethnographic terms, this commits us to a program sketched over a decade ago by George Marcus, when he argued that macrosystems could be usefully rendered as "they are subtly imagined or registered within the ongoing life processes of an intensely studied and interpreted microsituation" (1986:169). Recognizing that locality is an emergent historical product expressed in forms of agency and sociality (Appadurai 1996:18, 178), should in fact invite a turn to close-grained ethnography, in which knowledge is produced through intimacy (Das 1995:3; Appadurai 1997; cf. Herzfeld 1997; cf. Ortner 1995:1;) and kept alert to the "endogenous historicity of local worlds" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:27).

With this ethnographic framework in mind, it seems to me crucial to assay the role of the subject in the emergent localities and localizing processes of a globalized world. "Individuals," Roland Robertson reminds us, "are as much a part of the globalization process as any other basic category of social-theoretical discourse" (1991:79). Thus, it is worth asking: How is globalization experienced? How does it pervade the social life of individuals and their reach for self-definition? In what ways are the global and the local reproduced and transformed by the subject? After all, "social circumstances are not just separate from personal life, nor are they just an external environment to them. In struggling with intimate problems, individuals help actively to reconstruct the universe of social activity around them" (Giddens 1991:12). Some local actors, of course, may be oblivious to transformative global processes even as they are subject to them; some may attribute those processes to other domains of lived experience; and still others may attempt an alert and active engagement with or against global forces (Das 1995:202-203). As for what this might mean for ethnographic practice, it may be that anthropologists will try to coax forth local commentaries and reflections on the reach of the global. Or perhaps ethnographers will want something different from their subjects: As George Marcus puts it, ethnographers will not seek out local knowledge so much as "an articulation of the forms of anxiety that are generated by the [subjects'] awareness of being affected by what is elsewhere without knowing what the particular connections to that elsewhere might be" (1997:97). The point to be stressed is that the subject is fundamental to the global production of locality, and may be rendered ethnographically as an agentive actor within whom circumstances, situations, and projects of an ephemeral or enduring character inscribe the global.

I raise these matters in order to begin a story about some of the alternative modernities and fantasies that abound in the global traffic in culture and contemporary art, and which rely on, spring from, or lead to a certain fetishization of artwork, artistic subjectivities, and emblematic signatures. The globalized reproduction of images and

things has disturbed virtually all of Southeast Asia, propagating or disseminating hybrid effects across locales and regionally situated artworlds. This traffic is already a sign and a consequence of modernity (Giddens 1990), and brings with it certain anxieties, convictions, and illusions about art and self. In this increasingly globalized and commodified art market, ideas about individual genius, about a painter's style and signature, and about the singularity of the "work" persist as a basis for distinguishing between originals, copies, imitations, and fakes, and in part determine the production, legitimation, and circulation of paintings. The prevailing discourses of value and taste--of connoisseurship--continue to exhibit signs of anxiety and desire when it comes to possessing the "real thing" and controlling artifacts associated with an authentic self.

My story has to do with several paintings--some faked, some reproduced, some stolen, and some retrieved--that circulated in Bandung, West Java, for a brief period in April and May of 1994. All bore the signature, "A. D. Pirous"--the name of one of Indonesia's most distinguished contemporary painters. I joined Pirous in his pursuit to get to the bottom of things, and so came to learn about the cult of the autograph and the erratic prices of Indonesia's then expanding art market, about stuttering art dealers and wayward apprentices, and about the deceptive objects, figures, and fantasies that inhabit and shape Bandung's cosmopolitan art scene, a scene that can alert us to art worlds emerging elsewhere in Southeast Asia and beyond. Dwelling in the Bandung art world means dwelling amid the phantasmagorical effects brought on by modernity, that is to say, dwelling amid the localizing effects of social influences emanating from afar (cf. Giddens 1990: 19; Giddens 1991: 188). But then, that kind of living has been Pirous's story from the beginning:

Modernity and Modernism

Pirous is not the kind of figure that typically has inhabited so many of the ethnographic volumes on Indonesian cultures. His father's family were descendants of Muslim migrants who came to the Dutch East Indian island of Sumatra from the Gujerat States of India. In the waning year of Dutch colonial authority, his father worked for a merchant in Meulaboh, Aceh--a merchant rumored to be Jewish--and then took charge of a rubber plantation and several urban properties that he rented out. Born in 1933, Abdul Djalil Pirous spent his childhood helping his Acehnese mother prepare Qur'anic embroidery, listening to her stories about the life of the Prophet, going to Muslim and Dutch schools, and watching dubbed and subtitled Flash Gordon films at his uncle's theatre. At the dawn of the Indonesian revolution he stood next to his aged father and together watched Meulaboh burn, his father remarking "I don't know what this *merdeka*--this independence--means." Young Pirous would later join the student army and paint propaganda posters for the nationalist guerilla forces. In 1955, at age 22, he left home for the Bandung Institute of Technology to study art with Dutch cubist, Ries Mulder. Steeped in formalism and abstraction, but intimidated by growing ideological pressures to conform to socialist realism, Pirous refrained from exhibiting his paintings during the late Sukarno years (George 1997). Following the collapse of the Indonesian left and the violent birth of the Soeharto regime, Pirous became a rising star in the Bandung and Jakarta art circles. Returning from two years of study in the United States in 1971, he pioneered an explicitly Muslim Indonesian art by beginning a painterly exploration of abstraction and calligraphic renderings of Qur'anic Arabic and Jawi.[2] He has been at the forefront of contemporary Indonesian Muslim art ever since, exhibiting both at home and abroad.[3] Along the way, he founded the Decenta artists' collective, became Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts and Design at the Bandung Institute of Technology, held a 25 year Retrospective Exhibit in Jakarta (see Buchari and Yuliman 1985), produced the first Istiqlal Indonesian Muslim Art Festival in 1991 (see George 1998), and was chosen by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Aga Khan Trust for

Culture as Southeast Asian curator for an exhibit of contemporary Muslim art at the 1997 Venice Biennial.

Pirous's life as an artist has been coincident with the rise and approaching twilight of aesthetic modernism in Indonesia. Although modernism should not be reduced to or equated with a single strategic discourse on aesthetics (Stiles and Selz 1996), it may usefully be given a time and some general contours (see Sullivan 1995: 260-261; also Jameson 1991:305-313): Emerging as a humanist project in Europe in the late 19th century, and it came into being when market exchange economies, the bourgeois public sphere, the idea of nationalism, and European colonial expansion and occupation were well in their ascendancy. Modernism and modern art subsequently became part of the late and lingering colonial project in the Dutch East Indies. If modern art was a site of colonization prior to Indonesian independence, it endured as a site of decolonizing struggle and tense debate with respect to cultural nationalism and fears of imperialism after 1945. Although the prominent historians of Indonesian art do not discuss it as such (e.g., Dermawan 1990; Holt 1967, 1970; Maklai 1993; Miklouho-Maklai 1991; Spanjaard 1988, 1990, 1993; Wright 1994), the first fifty years of Indonesian aesthetic practice and debate could be described as an attempt to inhabit and domesticate the modernist legacy. Of course, an Indonesian history of modernism may also bring to light what Partha Chatterjee (1993:13) might call "fragmented resistances" to this globalized and normalizing aesthetic project. In acknowledgment of resilient local histories, I want to suggest that modernism can be regarded as a localizing process, in Appadurai's terms, wherein Indonesian engagements and resistance pluralize modernist aesthestic practices. In this view, modernism emerges in the Indonesian art world as a set of local dilemmas rather than as a set of globalized certainties--again, with implications for the ethnography of artists and artworks.

As Frederic Jameson has put it, aesthetic modernism was "predicated on the invention of a personal, private style, as unmistakable as your fingerprint, as

incomparable as your own body," and in this way was "linked to the the conception of a unique self and private identity, a unique personality and individuality, which [could] be expected to generate its own unique vision of the world . . . ." (1983:114). Abstract, formal, and nonobjective images inscribed the artist's inner being or genius, and painting in particular, enjoyed a privileged status as the "most direct inscription of the human mind" (Sullivan 1995:261). But as Pirous's encounter with aesthetic modernism can show us, finding inner being and genius also had to do with colonial subjection and anti-colonial struggle. As he described it to me, Pirous's early art training in Aceh and Medan emphasized the capacity to copy or imitate with precision. Anxieties about personal vision and style, or about a unique artistic subjectivity, were absent. That changed as he began his formal studies with his Dutch teacher. Mulder's lessons about form, abstraction, vision, and painterly identity eluded Pirous for quite some time, but his demeaning insults did not. Mulder knew no Indonesian and so wounded his student in English or in Dutch--"This is shit, shit" or "Hey Pirous, not bad, perhaps you could find work with Disney." Several years of these stinging insults led Pirous to withdraw to his home and begin an intense struggle with materials and textures, sometimes scorching and scratching his canvases. It was only upon selling an abstract painting for the first time--around 1960 and to a Canadian collector--that Pirous felt he had arrived at a unique and personal style.[4] I have condensed here a much more complex and nuanced story about artistic influence. What I want to stress is that Pirous's formal training at Bandung shows an instance in which a colonizing modernism--in terms of its discourses and institutional structures--is occupied and domesticated. Though subjected to aesthetic modernism, Pirous was able to find within it a place for the self-defining work that afforded him a sense of independence from his Dutch teacher. It was the source of his humiliation and subsequent emancipation. For Pirous, then, aesthetic modernism and its peculiar discourses of painterly subjectivity, became a way to be an Indonesian artist in a global world of art.

Occupying the terrain of modernism in the way that he did inclined Pirous to think and talk about his paintings as material expressions of his inner being, his vision. Like so many around him--teachers, other painters, collectors--he took part in a "modernist magic" that conjured the painterly image as an embodiment of the painter's inner being and genius no matter how the image was circulated or reproduced. That modernist magic lingers still in the globalized art market of today, especially in discourses of connoisseurship and in judgments about the "artness of art" (MacGaffey n.d.). In contrast to most commodified texts (yet with a likeness to autographs and relic manuscripts), the painted original continues to be construed as a unique object touched by a painter's hand and genius, a construal that perpetuates an intense concern over authenticity as the object is consumed or circulated. Discerning the artist's touch--by telltale strokes, style, or by signature--is a way to "see" the artwork as an authentic and original expression of a painter's subjectivity, and is perhaps the means for someone to confidently take part in any "imaginary commonwealth of connoisseurs" (Koerner & Koerner 1996).

Fakes, forgeries, and various kinds of copies of course have the potential to dissipate the value of the unique original and to disrupt the circuits of exchange and consumption in which the original is located (Lowenthal 1990). For this reason, modernist anxieties about authenticity and deception commingle and find resolution in the expert systems that have been erected around art practices, and through social life in the era of modernity more generally (Giddens 1990, 1991). In the modernist regime, artist and consumer are linked through chains of professional discourse that ratify value and authenticity (cf. Irvine 1989:257-259; MacGaffey, n.d.):[5] Curators, gallery owners, dealers, art critics, and other experts constitute a special subclass of speakers whose discourse (or reported discourse [e.g., by way of signatures and seals of affirmation]) accompanies objects into relationships of exchange; indeed, such utterances can become commodities or objects of exchange themselves.

I rehearse these points about modernism in order to portray some of the social and experiential terrain that Pirous must inhabit. That terrain does not correspond to the local horizons of Bandung. Rather, it is shaped and weathered by intruding and globalized social formations. Various entangled histories work through Pirous; I have tried to name some of them: colonialism, anticolonialism, nationalism, modernism, Islam. In the meantime, expert systems and commodity exchange not only set the value of his paintings but impinge on his social being and his relationship with his work. He has told me that he often finds solace and spiritual fulfillment in painting, but his identity, prestige and livelihood as a painter are matters of no little concern to him, and they are matters most susceptible to transformations from afar. In short, Pirous, like everyone else, lives a local life, but inhabits a phenomenal world of global dimension.

Vertigo in the Market

The art frenzy of the mid and late 1980s took place not only in New York and Japan, but in Indonesia as well, as corporations and the expanding elite and upper middle classes began to invest their liquid capital in art.[6] By 1992, senior artist Popo Iskandar worried in the Jakarta newspaper *Kompas* (12 January, 1992) that the art boom might boomerang. He linked the boom to upper middle class consumption, but lamented the dearth of critics and the uneven dissemination of artworks and art discourse through various levels of Indonesian society. Pirous echoed this lament two years later during Ramadhan (February 1994), as I began my four-month stay with his family. He complained that the overheated market lacked the voice of experienced art experts who were qualified to evaluate works. The few critics who were around were either art reporters and journalists, or dealers, who had a vested interest in the works they were promoting. Popo had observed that the boom in art, the lack of authoritative art discourse, and the celebrity status of a few artists had encouraged young artists to

forge paintings. Pirous did not raise that issue. Rather he worried over the disorderliness of the Indonesian art market, and over the lack of authorities and institutions that might keep prices and painterly reputations in proportion. There was no one in whom collectors and painters could put their trust. The artist always had to be watchful about his or her works, and the prices they commanded.

In the course of the next several weeks, Pirous sold a large calligraphic painting ("Nothing Whatsoever is Hidden from God" 1994) from his personal collection to the Minister of Religious Affairs, Dr. H. Tarmizi Taher, for just over $6000.00, and banked remittances from a tobacco company that had reproduced one of his paintings for its official Lebaran card. He also bought back a painting he had made in 1968, "A Child and Birds," when a friend, Rudy Pranandjaya, serving as an intermediary for a collector, brought it by Pirous's home for confirmation as an original and with an offer of sale. About the same time he brooded over what to do about a publisher that had reproduced one of his calligraphic works as cover art for a volume of poems by Emha Najib. Pirous didn't mind so much that neither Emha nor his publisher had sought permission to reproduce the work, but was disturbed that the designer had defaced the image with a deep tear. In a sense it was a double sacrilege--a deformation of the Qur'anic scripture that was featured in the image, and an abuse of the artist's work.

In each of these cases, we see Pirous directly attending to the circulation and dissemination of his original works and images, and negotiating their exchange value without the benefit of an agent. The exchanges also preserve the relationship between painter and image in which a unique work is attributed to a unique individual. Yet several of these exchanges are inflected by what Lewis Hyde (1979) describes as an "erotic" commerce, the sort of commerce that he sees manifest in gift economies: The paintings or images are treated not just as commodities, but as things of value and social consequence within particular social encounters and relationships. Paintings are exchanged, but so are favors, trust, and the stories that will follow the object: The

Minister of Religious Affairs obtains a painting at a low price and will be able to show it off in his home as a "real Pirous" picked out and sold to him by the artist himself. The artist buys back a "real Pirous" made long ago, retrieving it from its circulation among strangers and placing it within the sanctuary of his new private gallery, Serambi Pirous; with its life as a commodity or treasured possession for another temporarily effaced, the painting assumes new functions within an autobiographical assemblage of works and signs. Emha and his publisher are forgiven their infringement of proprietary rights and their violation of an image that indexes the artist's personal vision; Pirous is acquainted with the poet and the press and doesn't wish to cause them trouble.

It was about a month or so after Ramadhan that mysterious things started happening. First, Pirous and his wife, painter Erna Garnasih Pirous, discovered that several works belonging to them had disappeared from storage at their private gallery. Thought to be missing were a few graphic works by Pirous and a painting by the late Indonesian artist, Affandi. Suspicions quickly fell upon a young man from a neighboring urban kampung who, on other occasions, had proven less than reliable and trustworthy in his job as a laborer and watchman at the gallery. His protests of innocence notwithstanding, Pirous dismissed him. The artist then alerted Rudy Pranandjaya and asked him to find out anything he could about the missing artworks through his network of dealers and gallery owners in Bandung.

The missing paintings never surfaced, but Rudy's sharp eye turned up a number of forged paintings being sold as Pirous originals in a Bandung art shop on Jalan Braga. I followed along with Pirous when he went to see for himself. In my count there were two forged Pirous canvases at the shop ("The Universe VII" [1983] and "Nature 30/The Northern Seaside" [1985]), and one framed photoreproduction taken from a calendar being sold as an original Pirous graphic. The shopkeeper did not recognize the artist and entered into a discussion and negotiation with Pirous, who was posing as an art collector. Pirous held one of the forged works and asked the shopkeeper how he knew

it was authentic. The man responded that he took all his works for appraisal to elder Bandung artist Barli, who ran a small art museum and gallery in the city, "He knows all about the painter." Pirous began to bargain for the painting and pushed the asking price downward slightly to $750.00, where the shopkeeper held firm. Instead of reaching for money, the artist pulled out his business card. As Pirous later told the episode to a journalist from the Bandung daily, Pikiran Rakyat, "I slid my card over like that and the shopkeeper began to stutter. I knew for a fact that the painting was a forgery because I did the original on paper and right now its in the collection of someone in Jakarta. The forgery was copied from a [catalogue]. . . I [also] saw works by Popo Iskandar, the late Sudjana Kerton, and the late Sadali. . . . The owner said the paintings were sold as originals only after being authenticated by Barli. Isn't it strange, what's the authenticity of my paintings got to do with a confirmation from Barli?"

Watching the confrontation, I had the feeling that the shopkeeper was indeed taken aback, but largely indifferent to the "crime." For him, selling art works appeared to be no different than selling vegetables. He defended himself saying he didn't know anything about art, he just sold paintings. Exasperated, Pirous threatened to go to the police unless the shopowner identified the forger within two days, and then left the shop. In truth, Pirous had no desire to turn to the police. It was better to keep them out of it for they likely would demand bribes to investigate the case. The specter of police intervention was enough, however, to get the shopkeeper to turn over the name the forger, who Pirous then summoned, again with threats of police involvement. The forger was a young man, about thirty, and self-taught as a painter. He turned over a few forgeries that remained in his possession and confessed to forging as many as thirty of Pirous's works and selling them to the shopkeeper for $45-50 apiece. After exacting a promise from the young painter to stop making forgeries, Pirous let the matter drop.

Bandung painter Jeihan Soekmantoro would later call such forgery a "cultural crime" (*kejahatan budaya*).[7] And painters Popo Iskandar and Srihadi also related tales

about encountering forgeries of their work. For these senior artists--whose paintings (in 1994) reportedly could command as much as $50000--the poor quality forgeries pouring out of an art shop might not seem to pose that much of a commercial threat. Their sources of patronage seem far too secure. Yet Pirous's trip down to Jalan Braga alerts us to a shadow workforce of "unrecognized artists" who have found not an elite, but a mass clientele for images and works of distinction and names of renown. Selling a painting signed "A. D. Pirous" is fully possible without a reliable chain of authentications; these days, authentications may not even be desired. In fact, contemporary counterfeiters may be able thrive, for, to quote Mark Jones, "Most of the purchasers of their work know that at the price they are paying they cannot be buying the real thing. They are buying an illusion--the illusion of status, of belonging, of success, conferred by the fraudulent reproduction of a famous name" (1990:13).

At first glance, the manufacture and circulation of these forged objects may appear to take place outside of that commerce that would embed the works in particular social relationships. Pirous's pursuit of the forged and the forger, after all, has largely to do with breaches of trust in the abstract expert systems that should have guaranteed the authenticity of painter-image relationships under the prevailing terms of modernism. He is not disturbed by anyone's capacity to mimic a work or a style of painting, nor does he worry about the disposition of a specific painting. Rather, he is trying to put a halt to deceptions in the kind of expert systems that Anthony Giddens has called modernity's "disembedding mechanisms" because of their capacity to remove social relations from the immediacies of face-to-face encounters (1990:21-28). His countermeasures are strictly local and face-to-face: Pirous confronts specific persons in the "chain of ratifications and deceits" and polices them by extracting promises, threatening legal interventions, and offering forgiveness. In short, he tries to re-embed the system in a binding personal face-to-face relationship, in a personalized commerce of verbal exchange.

Yet elsewhere in these precincts of circulation, fantasies of personalized exchange also intruded into the manufacture of a faked Pirous painting. The illusion is one of social belonging by way of commodities *and* gifts, an illusion inscribed onto a work of art that mimicked Pirous's style, but refrained from copying an existing canvas. By coincidence, the fake turned up at the same time that the paintings went missing at Serambi Pirous, and the forgeries appeared on Jalan Braga. One Sunday, a man came by Pirous's home wanting authentication for two paintings bearing the signature "A. D. Pirous." Pirous was away, and so Erna received the visitor. Explaining he was representing a potential purchaser, the visitor pulled the two canvases from his car. One was a forged version of a 1985 work, "Rock by Night;" the other was a calligraphic work and a garish fake. But unlike the forgeries I have mentioned so far, the fake showed a special intimacy with Pirous's own work, for it bore a likeness to the artist's way of inscribing the back of a canvas. Pirous usually--but not always--will write the title of the work in Indonesian and English on this unpainted surface, and will occasionally note the year, a list of materials, and the place of origin--Bandung.

The fake bore the title Saksi IV ("Witness IV"), left untranslated; the place, Bandung; and the year, 1993. It also included a mixed-code and misspelled list of materials: "*pualam* [marble paste]--acrilic [sic] colour--on canvas." Beneath the title was written what appears to be a tafsiran (an "interpretation") in Indonesian of the Arabic verse on the painted surface:[8]

Tuhan langit dan bumi
apa yang ada diantarakeduanya
yang mahaperkasa lagi mahapengampun

[Lord of the heavens and earth
what is there between them
the one who is all-powerful and all-forgiving]

Finally, in a different hand and in different ink was written, in English, "For Erie 18/7/93" beneath the name and signature of one of Indonesia's popular television talk-show hosts, Ebet Kadarusman.

The visitor left with the paintings, never to return. A week later, the Sunday edition of Pikiran Rakyat carried a classified "For Sale" notice announcing "Paintings: Works by Pirous" and a phone number. Thinking this might be a lead to the works missing from their gallery, Erna called up, and using the name Lora, arranged to view the works. She saw instead a number of fakes, including Saksi IV, for sale by a young man named Erie. When Pirous got back to town, he and I went down to the southside to find Erie. No sooner had we walked into the bare yard behind a cassava-chip warehouse, when a beaming twenty-something male stepped from a house and said, "Mr. Pirous" and invited us inside. It was Erie.

No paintings were in sight in the cramped parlor. In the conversation that followed, Pirous pressed for details about the fake paintings: How many were there, Who did them? Erie seemed oblivious to the seriousness of the painter's concern. He denied making the paintings, but eagerly volunteered that he was a devoted fan of Pirous's work, and that he had recognized Pirous from his photos in the newspaper and magazines. Could he have Pirous's autograph? Flummoxed by the question for a moment, Pirous lectured Erie about fraud and asked once more about the painters and paintings. Getting up to go, Pirous insisted that Erie come to his home the following week and turn over the faked or forged paintings or face sterner trouble. But before we left, Erie asked for Pirous's autograph yet again.

Erie did show up in a few days with a couple of paintings, one of them Saksi IV. Pirous grilled him: This was a fake painting; how and why would Ebet Kadarusman would have given a fake Pirous to the young man? Erie confessed that he did not know the television celebrity and had forged his signature on the back of the painting. He had wanted to impress friends by showing them a personal gift from the talk show host. Pirous pressed further. Who made the painting? And here the problem of "other Pirous's" became more complicated. Erie fingered one of Pirous's nephews. They had been schoolmates at one of the local colleges, and Erie got the painting from him. Stunned, Pirous dismissed Erie. Yet Erie lingered, and begged the painter for his autograph. Pirous turned him down. Incapable of letting go of his fantasies, Erie asked if he might visit another time and get the painter's signature.

Pirous's nephew, I was to learn, was not just a brother's son, but also an apprentice to the uncle and master painter he so deeply admired and wished to imitate. Pirous had taken him under his wing, paid for some of his schooling, and had been training him to help in creating the calligraphic paintings for which Pirous is so well known. The concept and design of each were Pirous's, as was the choice of Qur'anic passage and calligraphic form. But molding or etching the Arabic orthography demanded great labor and time, and so Pirous recruited his nephew's eye and hand in producing several works. In this regard, some of the painter's works are studio and kinship productions issued under the name "A. D. Pirous" and do not conform to the presumed modernist ideal linking a unique work of art to the touch of an inspired and singular, originary self.

Pirous wound up forgiving his nephew--though not without some frank discussion with him--and more or less forgetting about Erie. The episode has not given Pirous further concern. I mention it here to show that faked or forged paintings are produced not only as art commodities but also as replicas conjured up by the mimetic desires of aspiring painters and connoisseurs. No less than the forger and shopkeeper

knocking off fake Pirous's on Jalan Braga, or Pirous himself, Erie and Pirous's nephew belong to globalized art world in which objects construed as "art" circulate as commodities, gifts, signs of pure culture, markers of taste and class, and embodiments of aesthetic subjectivity (cf. Appadurai 1996). All these figures, for example, know something of the social magic that ensues from a painting signed "A. D. Pirous," though not in any way that would allow them to recognize the fetishization of art as such or openly to acknowledge art as an exclusionary form of cultural production. And all of them struggle with, and seek advantage or satisfactions in, the irrationality of art value. But as I have tried to show, these struggles (manifest in desire and disciplined calculation) not only are waged over and against the uncertain value of art objects that move back and forth between commodity spheres and private classifications (cf. Kopytoff 1986), but also come into play against the precariousness of social identities that attach to works of art.

Conclusion

There is nothing especially "Indonesian" about Pirous's efforts to bring a stop to the forgeries and fakes signed "A. D. Pirous." At the same time, Pirous cannot be an "Indonesian artist," and nor can his works be "Indonesian paintings" without his facing the dilemmas spawned by modernist ideologies and the transnational art commodity market. The social construction of singular identities and objects is both intimate and global in dimension. This view, I would argue, follows from thinking of globalization as a localizing process, as Appadurai (1996) would have us do. Indeed, seeing locality as an emergent historical and global phenomenon expressed in intimate forms of agency and sociality means that we can overturn the division of ethnographic labor in which political economists write the global and cultural analysts write the local (cf.,

Tsing 1993:289; but contrast the debates in Featherstone 1990 and King 1991). In my stories about Pirous and others in Bandung's art world, I have emphasized the way individuals and objects are part of a "vernacular" globalization process (Appadurai 1996:10), and so call attention to the lived local dilemmas of individuals finding their way in the phantasmagorical worlds of modernity. Desires, fantasies, tastes, and livelihoods get shaped within a global flow of commodified art works and media-disseminated images and identities, and yet remain inflected by the moral work of kinship, friendship, and personal encounter. Rather than dismiss the artist, the connoisseur, and the art object as modernist or bourgeois fictions, we should retain them as figures worthy of ethnographic concern, most especially as figures caught up in a world circumstanced by varied discourses, ideologies and social relations (cf. Wolff 1993:147). Further, I have tried to remain ethnographically alert to the "social life of things" (Appadurai 1986), for works of art exist not only as circulating commodities but also as objects manipulated within the overlapping horizons of intimate commerce and Giddens' expert systems (cf. Kopytoff 1986; Marcus and Myers 1995:34). In fact, it is the entanglement of these social fields that amplifies the illusions and anxieties about the faked and the forged, the original and the authentic. Moreover, it is in such entanglements that globalization may perhaps exact its most profound transformation of selves and things.

Notes

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[1]Modernity and globalization are neither new themes or new phenomena, of course. For example, the conditions and dilemmas of modernity were focal problems in the

sociology of Max Weber (1968) and Georg Simmel (1950), just as they are in the contemporary work of Anthony Giddens (1990, 1991). Globalization, too, enjoyed a long tradition of study, largely around the problems of modernization, acculturation, and syncretism, before its more recent reappropriation and rehabilitation in the political economic researches of Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) and Eric Wolf (1982), in the reflexive work of cultural critique by Marcus and Fischer (1986) and in commentaries on the predicaments of ethnographic writing (Clifford 1987; Clifford and Marcus 1986) and art criticism (Myers 1994, 1998).

[2]Jawi is Malay or Indonesian rendered in Arabic orthography. Pirous uses Jawi in his works to create translation-like "interpretations" (tafsiran) of Qur'anic passages.

[3]For overviews of Pirous's career, see Buchari and Yuliman (1985), George (1997, 1998), Spanjaard (1988), and Wright (1994).

[4]It is important to see that it was a face-to-face "market encounter" with a collector that validated Pirous's project of self-making through image-making, rather than anything intrinsic to the work of art in question. Though he had captured the attention of connoisseurs, Pirous never settled for very long in any one painterly style or approach. That changed in 1971, when he began a long exploration of calligraphy and abstraction, coincident with his working for the first time in acylics, etching, and serigraphy.

[5]As Wyatt MacGaffey (n.d.) has noted, the earliest exercises in European connoisseurship offered advice about how to distinguish "real art" from fakes.

[6]The economic and political turmoil of 1998 brought a severe chill to the Indonesian art market. I anticipate that foreign collectors of Indonesian works will take advantage of the chaos and purchase works at exceedingly low prices.

[7]Benedict Anderson (personal communication) has suggested that Jeihan's remark about treating forgery as a "cultural crime" is symptomatic of a globalized art discourse

that produces normalizing concepts (most often in English) and moves them across languages.

[8]To date I have been unable to locate the Qur'anic source for this verse.

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