Ghost Series: Printing the Unprinted

Artistic Research for International Art Exhibtion in Indonesian Paviliun, Venice Art Biennale 2026

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Picture 1,Printmaking works:

Abstract

The *Ghost Series* interprets the curatorial concept for the exhibition *Printing the Unprinted*, presented at the Indonesian Pavilion for the 2026 Venice Biennale in Venice, Italy. The exhibition creates fiction and explores a "reverse narrative" in the Age of Discovery. It features collaborative works by the curator and seven artists from diverse backgrounds, developed through an artist-in-residence program at the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica in Venice. This series forms part of the researcher's ongoing artistic inquiry into identity and materiality, a focus that has informed their work in recent years. The exhibition specifically enables exploration of collective memory, defined as knowledge and information embedded within social and cultural contexts.

Keyword: reverse narrative, Venice Biennale 2026, Indonesian Pavilion, identity, materiality, artist-inresidencies

Research Method

The exhibition employ art as a "critical practice," using symbolic and metaphorical power through a tangible, sensory medium. The critical practice in art creates space for the observer's discursive experience. This experience differs from the logic of language; it "invokes" personal knowledge, experience, and memory by engaging the emotional realm.

In this context, the works produced are deeply rooted in specific methodologies:

• Printmaking, a medium with political and cultural power, serves to record and document memories, information, and existence. A collaborative project between the curator and the artist takes the form of a book—a chronicle of a fictional 14th-century Batak Kingdom that embarks on an expedition to Venice, Italy. The printmaking medium—specifically Western etching—has been historically intertwined with representations of the "East" during the colonial era.

• Artist in residency as a collaborative creative method, draw upon the resources of the host and the environment of Venice itself. This approach contrast to the conventional "national pavilion" model, which often treats a venue merely as a site for displaying or presenting artworks. Instead, the aritist in residecy program necessitates an ongoing dialogue between the curator, artists and the host, allowing the venue to actively contribute to the exhibition.

- Site-specific installation is a method in which elements of a location are incorporated as essential components of an artwork. In this context, Venice has a long history of attracting explorers, merchants, and visitors, a tradition that persists today. The city's historic buildings, diverse architecture, and artefacts preserve these collective memories. The work activates the beholder's experiences both as a visitor and a dweller.



Picture 2 (left). Well for Venice



Picture 3. Details of *Mass-Ghosts*

Discussion & Result

Picture 1: The series of printmaking works represents the Playeran Agoeng (Great Voyage) from the fiction manuscript. Each work illustrates the scenes before, during, and after the voyages. The first plate shows the artist/craftman forging a sword before a shaman as part of a ritual ceremony before the journey. The second plate depicts three delegates from the Batak kingdom learning, studying, or apprenticing in Venice. The voyage includes women among the delegates. She plays an important role, studying the most advanced technology in Europe at that time. Women are less mentioned in the history of Western discovery. However, in Southeast Asian countries, women have important roles; the king gives women important tasks as part of the voyage. The third plate represents the period after the great voyage. Contact and dialogue between Sumatra and Venice changed some artefacts and images, as seen in the logo of Barus Port, the ceramic vase that combines Batak and Venetian styles, and the metal door knocker.

Picture 2: Site-specific installation entitled "Well for Venice". A well stores and draws water, serving as a vessel. But a well is also a portal connecting sky and earth, and an axis that marks direction and space. A well collects water during its cyclical journey. The "Well for Venice" is a connection, a portal, and an axis, a place where both the unknown and expected come and go. Where explorers and travellers who pass through, though uninvited and undelivered. Humans are like wells, vessels for passage that hold fleeting memories.

Picture 3: This work is an inside-outside self-portrait. It is a metaphor of the dualistic problem of a portrait where it is expected to represent both physical likeness and something invisible, the inner of the sitter. In other words, the body or face is an external aspect, and the soul is an internal aspect. The reversed face could not be fully identified, and it has become a mask. The damaged and distorted features add a sense of discomfort or horror. These can be perceived as the inner aspects in a portrait that are invisible, hidden, abstract, unknown, concealed, and somewhat negative. When the face becomes a mask, it becomes a wall, a mirror that reflects back to the beholder. Reveal the ghost in ourselves.