

Indonesian Collector Tom Tandio: Nongkrong with Artists as the Key to Collecting | COBO Social

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Tom Tandio

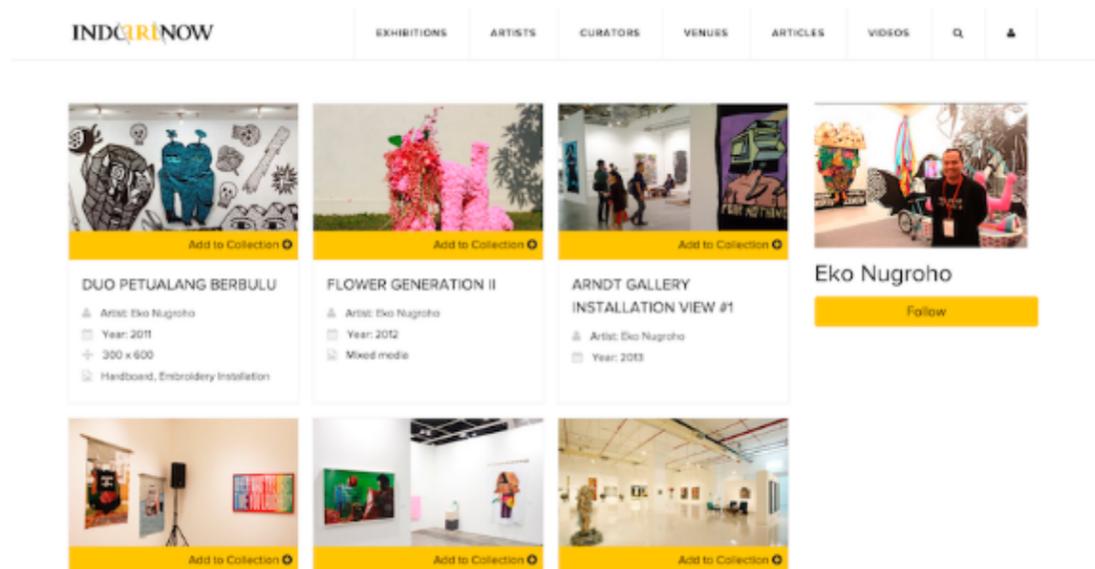




Eko Nugroho - Couple Series



Tom Tandio - The Man Who Fell into Art: Collecting as a Form of Personal Narrative (Installation View #8)



Website Layout of IndoArtNow Foundation

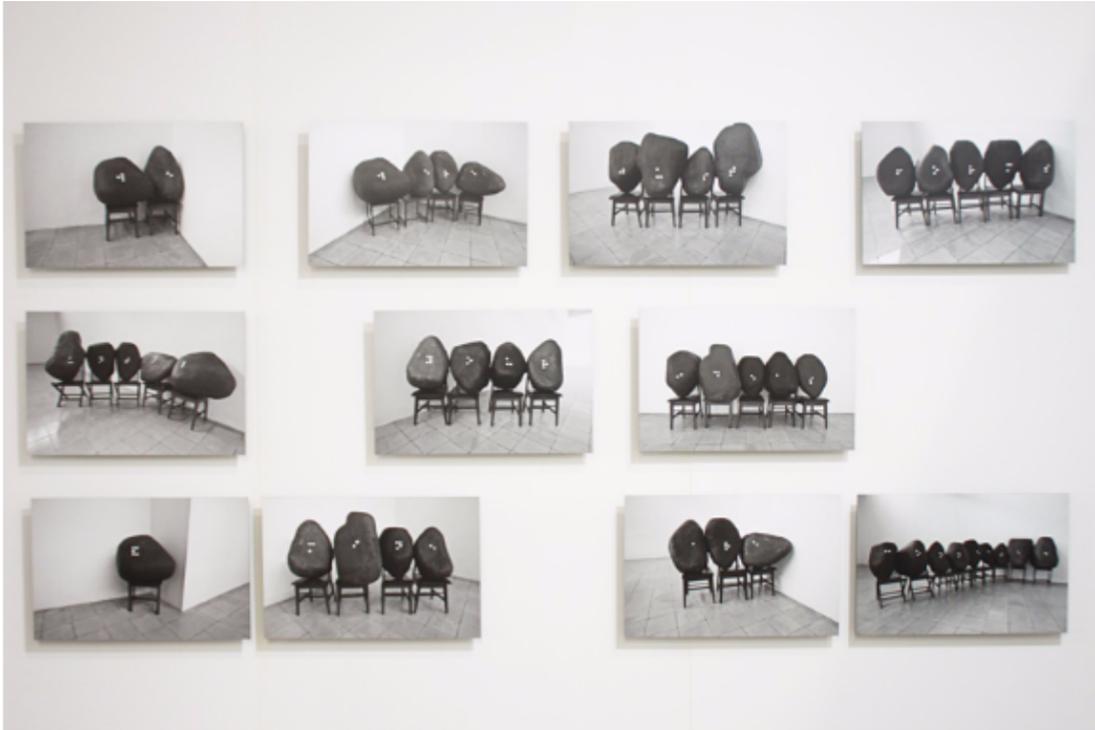


Jompet Kuswidananto - Words





Tom Tandio - The Man Who Fell into Art: Collecting as a Form of Personal Narrative (Installation View #1)



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Naima Morelli is an art writer and curator with a focus on contemporary art from the Asia Pacific region. She has written...

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 COBO Challenge

Is life about discovering oneself, or is it more about building oneself? If there is an activity which can respond to the evergreen nature/nurture question, that is art collecting. In the process of grappling with their own identity through art, the best collectors understand that acquiring art is not simply an individualistic pursuit. It is rather about becoming part of an artistic ecosystem, which they can help nurture. Indonesian collector Tom Tandio exemplifies this attitude, modelling an ethic which makes the entire system grow. The businessman was introduced to collecting contemporary art in 2007 by his sister-in-law, starting with Chinese contemporary art. Over the years he shifted his scope to Southeast Asian art, with a focus on Indonesian artists. He served on the board of the Biennale Jogja, Yogyakarta, and is currently the President of the Board of Young Collectors for the Art Stage Jakarta art fair.

TEXT: Naima Morelli

IMAGES: Courtesy of Tom Tandio & [IndoArtNow Foundation](#)



Tom Tandio's foundation IndoArtNow looks like the marvellous project of a madman: mad for arts that is. Since 2011 – the year the foundation started – not a single Indonesian show went unnoticed and unrecorded on the web-platform. A new expansion has been a series video-interviews with Indonesian artists – a natural progression of the discussions and informal meetings the collector has with artist on regular basis. Tandio indeed thinks that it is in these hangouts – which Indonesians call *Nongkrong* – that the key for building a great collection lies.

The collector's recent exhibition in SongEun ArtSpace in Seoul, [Korea](#) – which just ended on the 10th of December – comprised 9 artists with over 30 pieces of artworks. It was the first time part of the collection was shown consistently. While the show surely had an impact, at the same time Tandio wasn't interested to set the parameters for what is considered good art: "Some might think that I'm trying to influence others, but in fact, I am showing my 'self', who I am" he explains.



Tom Tandio

Your show at SongEun Art Space was called "Tom Tandio: The Man Who Fell into Art: Collecting as a Form of Personal Narrative". Why did you choose that title?

The title was chosen by the curator, Alia Swastika. At the beginning, I found it

very cheesy, but apparently a lot of my friends loved it and didn't find it pretentious at all. Those who knew me before collecting and after, noticed I changed, just like a man who fell in love. (laughs)

Contemporary art in Indonesia has historically been a way to build nationalism. Was that on your mind when you first started collecting?

It is true that modern art in [Indonesia](#) was a way to build nationalism, but this is not the case with contemporary art. I think Indonesian contemporary art has been always about the ability to represent issues ranging from the political to the artistic discourses, even including popular culture. It is about reflecting on the past, reminding us of the present, and foreseeing a better future.

When I first started collecting, I wanted to find out more about my 'Indonesian self', since I spent most of my life overseas. I believe that through collecting art, I learned about who I really am and who I can possibly become. Holding this mindset, I must admit that art changed my life. So I must say that I don't believe that collecting must have this big burden of being 'nationalistic'.

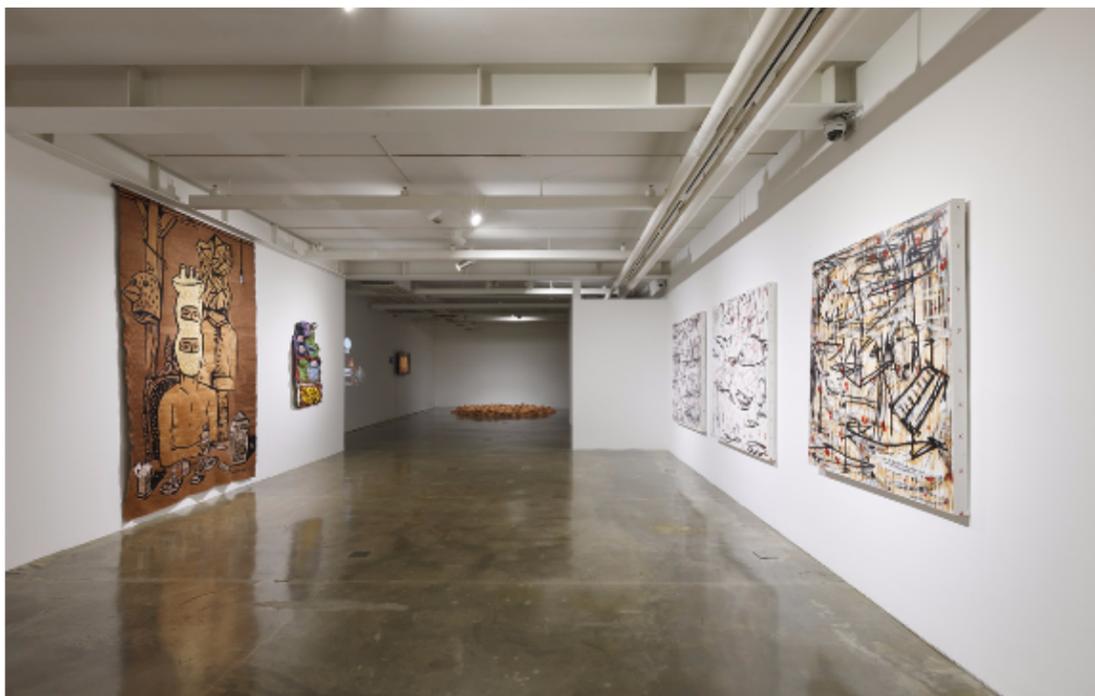


Eko Nugroho - Couple Series

Does your collection focuses solely on Indonesian artists, or is it open also to international artists?

I collect mostly Indonesian contemporary art, and that is directly derived from my process of collecting. When I find a work that interests me visually, I like to find out more about the artist, their art practice and his/her ideas embedded in the work. When a piece intrigues me and gets me somehow thinking or questioning something in life, then I will be excited to collect it. When I start collecting an artist's work, I believe in collecting his whole art practice, hence I hunt his previous pieces and, of course, his most recent artworks. In another words, I collect artists in depth.

As my process of collecting is time-consuming, it is tougher for me to dedicate myself to international artists. Hence I collect less international art. Not because I don't like it or I can't relate to it, rather because of my collecting process.



Tom Tandio – The Man Who Fell into Art: Collecting as a Form of Personal Narrative (Installation View #8)

In the absence of the government collecting contemporary art, do you Indonesian collectors feel the responsibility of having to contribute to make Indonesian art history? In other words, collecting for the nation rather than for personal preferences?

Let's put aside the idea of our own preferences first. Let's talk about urgency in the government's lack of involvement in the art world. Art is not prioritised in a country like ours, which focuses more on economical growth and prosperity. We practically do not have any contemporary art museums to archive our history. Therefore, it is crucial that Indonesian collectors take the responsibility to collect on behalf of the nation. We have quite a few Indonesian collectors, my seniors, already doing their part, and I hope to contribute too, one day. In my own way I contribute with the IndoArtNow Foundation, but in terms of preferences, I prefer collecting work that is more personal and contributes to my own self-discovery.



Website Layout of IndoArtNow Foundation

Why did you decided to start the IndoArtNow Foundation?

Archiving is one of the vital tools in the art scene nowadays, and IndoArtNow was born to keep a record of the current art practices, so that that knowledge can be accessed by the public now and in the future as an intellectual resource.

The Indonesian government does not have interest in archiving. We have the Indonesian Visual Art Archive (IVAA) which archives art history. However, I have always wondered: why can't we archive what is happening right now? Why must we always struggle to find records of late artists, past art events, old artworks etc? That is why I came up with this idea of archiving what is current. That's how the foundation started.

IndoArtNow is dedicated to developing knowledge through archives of artists, exhibitions, curators and other art professionals. We want to ensure the preservation of contemporary art and providing documents such as photographs, texts, and videos of artist interviews as an essential documentation tool. The recent concern is also to support the artists and art professional in international events.

For me archiving runs parallel to collecting, as they both precisely articulate our current state, recording what is happening, and providing some direction as to where we are going.



Jompet Kuswidananto – Words

Do you look at art differently when you are in a museum versus an art fair, meaning if you know it is possible to buy art, versus just appreciate a show in a disinterested way?

No, I don't look at art differently. When a work intrigues me somehow, I will research into the artist and his/her art practice. Ownership is not important for me. I believe that the main purpose of an artwork is fulfilled when its idea is successfully conveyed, therefore the opportunity of owning the work does not excite me any more than understanding the intriguing idea(s).



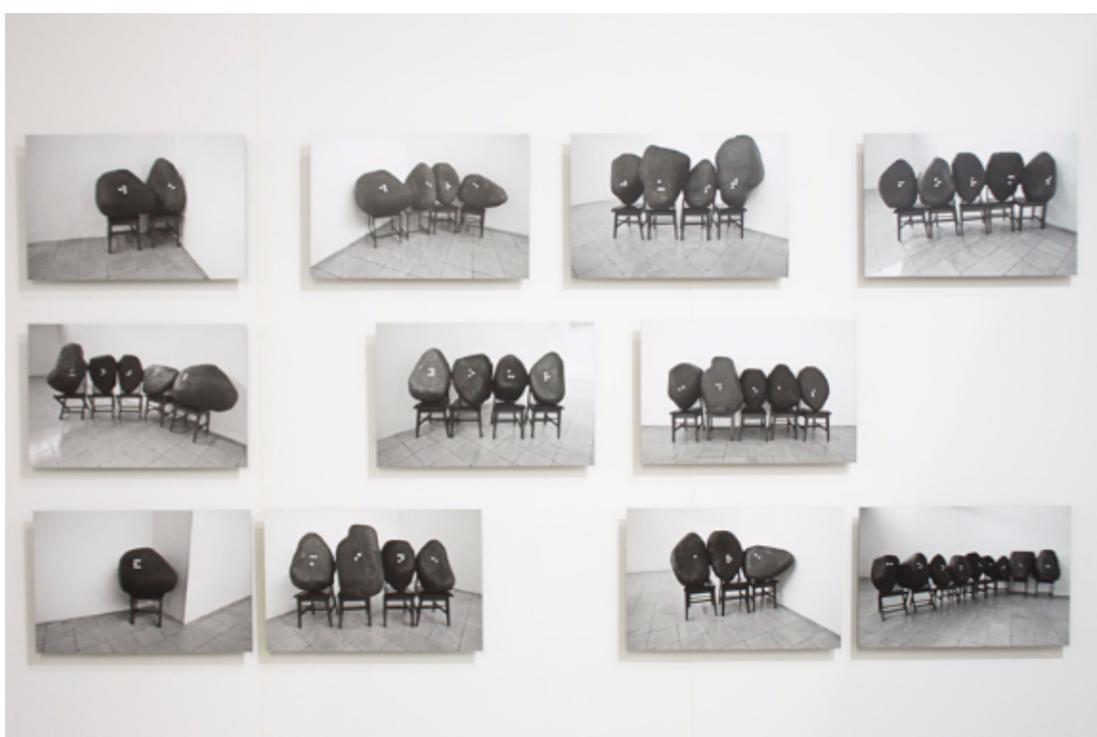
Tom Tandio – The Man Who Fell into Art: Collecting as a Form of Personal Narrative (Installation View #1)

You collect across different mediums, but do you ever follow trends?

I don't follow trends. I collect across different mediums for several reasons. First, when you collect enough paintings, you find yourself being more fascinated by sculptures or installation pieces. Second, I wish to support artists who don't focus just on painting. It is common knowledge that many collectors are only after paintings for their resale value.

Do you prefer collecting artists when they are young, right out of art school and then follow them throughout their career, or you'd rather acquire artists who are already established?

An artwork is a manifestation of an artist's ideas. As mentioned above, I collect an artist's works in depth, therefore the stage at which I meet him or her doesn't really matter. My collecting is a process based on discussions with the artist. I collect the works because I find affinity in the ideas and concerns, not because of an artist's seniority or prestige.



Wimo Ambala Bayang – You See Half You Get Half, You Seek More You Get All
Is that close relationship between artists and collectors, based on hanging out together and discussing, something quite peculiar to the Indonesian art world?

I really think it is a cultural thing. "Nongkrong" is a colloquial term in Indonesia for 'hanging out', it means to sit around and chit chat, but hey, that's where we, collectors and artists, bond. Not all collectors do it, but a few of our

Indonesian young collectors regularly *nongkrong* with artists. It is part of our lifestyle already.

Do you prefer buying from galleries, from auctions or directly from artists?

I never buy directly from artists as I see the art world as an ecosystem. For an artist to be successful, he/she must also have a strong gallery to support their career. As for buying from galleries or auctions, they are the same for me. I just collect whatever interests me.



Eko Nugroho - Violence Make Silent

What are the art events collectors should attend, especially in Asia?

I'd say the Jogja Biennale and the Jakarta Biennale... because they are both from Indonesia! (laughs) Jokes aside, of course I think collectors should visit as many biennales and museum shows as possible!

How can a budding collector tune to their own sensitivity in the noisy art world, where many are concerned by what everybody else thinks?

In a world full of noise, sometimes you need to have space to enjoy the silence. Only then can you hear what holds true for you. *Nongkrong* with the artists is the best way to fine-tune our own sensitivity. Spending time together to know the character of an artist, finding out that they are not pretentious in the work; this is the best way to hone one's own sensitivity. Of course, if one is short of time, you can always defer to a curator or a collector peer who does the artist-*nongkrong* for you! (laughs)

Naima Morelli is an art writer and curator with a focus on contemporary art from the Asia Pacific region. She has written for ArtsHub, Art Monthly Australia, Art to Part of Culture and Escape Magazine, among others, and she is the author of "Arte Contemporanea in Indonesia, un'introduzione" a book focused on the development of contemporary art in Indonesia. As a curator, her practice revolves around creating meaningful connections between Asia, Europe and Australia.

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