

LONDON

JULY

2026

FREEDOM

MERDEKA

SADUK BATHUK SANYARI BUMI
DITOHIPATI

LAKHAI
RAKYAT BERSATU TAK BISA DIKA-



RAKYAT PASTI MENANG

Rakyat Pasti Menang

Taring Padi

8 July — 22 November 2026

Taring Padi, meaning *fang of the rice*, refers to the sharp, spiked husk at the tip of the rice plant and to the idea that even the smallest and most humble elements of a society carry the capacity to resist.

The collective of art workers was founded in Yogyakarta by a group of artists and activists in 1998. In the nearly three decades since, Taring Padi have used art as a tool for education, mobilisation, and social transformation. Their works are rarely made by a single hand, but through a shared principle of learning and working together, with themes agreed collectively.

Rakyat Pasti Menang, Bahasa Indonesia for ‘the people united will never be defeated’, brings together major works from across Taring Padi’s history. Presented in the Majlis, a space for gathering and exchange, the setting speaks directly to the collective’s practice of dialogue and collaboration. The exhibition unfolds across a series of changing displays: the first, presented here, focuses on their founding amid sociopolitical upheaval in Indonesia; the second turns to their engagement with land struggles and workers’ rights; and the third gathers recent works co-produced through international alliances.

Taring Padi emerged as a collective in response to the fall of President Suharto, who was in power in Indonesia for over three decades, from 1967 to 1998. His regime, named the New Order, is widely considered a military dictatorship characterised by censorship, corruption, and the suppression of dissent. Suharto’s rise to power followed a US-backed campaign of anti-communist mass killings in 1965–66, the legacy of which continues to shape Indonesian society today.

Suharto’s rule was ultimately brought down by mass protests and a wave of popular resistance that came to be known as the Reformasi era (Reformation), a period defined by demands for democracy, accountability, and an end to authoritarian rule. It was within this atmosphere of protest and political possibility that Taring Padi was formed. The exhibition takes its title from the people’s chants heard in the streets at the time.

The banners on display are among Taring Padi’s earliest surviving works. Made for marches, occupations, and protests which members actively took part in, they confront the violence of the Suharto regime and demand radical societal change. These early banners established the visual language and practice that continues to define the collective’s work: art made with and for people, and in the service of political struggle.

The exhibition also features Taring Padi’s cardboard puppets (*wayang kardus*) and woodcut prints (*cukil kayu*). Rooted in Indonesian traditions and social realism, these forms draw on histories of Javanese popular culture and extend the country’s shadow-puppet tradition into militant and playful tools made for demonstrations and mobilisations.

Grounded in the historical moment from which they emerged, Taring Padi continue their work unabated in the present, carrying forward their spirit of solidarity and resistance into new political and cultural contexts.

List of works



Mereka Yang Bertanggung Jawab, 1997-1998
Those Who Are Responsible
Acrylic on canvas | 335 × 335 cm

At the centre of this canvas, a mass grave is depicted surrounded by deforested lands. Rendered in grey, black, and white with vivid red accents, the sides of the banner illustrate scenes of soldiers assaulting civilians, protesters carrying red placards against political nepotism and cronyism, people grieving and drowning, and burning fields. A farmer on the top left, the largest figure in the composition, points resolutely towards the grave, decrying the injustice before him. One of the earliest surviving banners by Taring Padi, it was made by Yustoni Volunteero (1970-2018), their first founding president. The work condemns state violence and militarism, as well as the exploitation of people and the environment. Specifically, it refers to the mass killings perpetrated by Suharto's regime between 1965 and 1966 during the US-backed anti-communist pogroms. The number of people killed is estimated to be between 500,000 and 1,000,000.



Sedumuk Bathuk Sanyari Bumi, 1997-1998
We Will Fight for Our Dignity Until the Last Drop of our Blood
Acrylic on canvas | 330 × 330 cm

This banner was also created by Yustoni Volunteero. The canvas is split into six panels which allegorise various scenes and landscapes. The top central panel features farmers, factory workers, and civilians marching forward defiantly. Superimposed on top of them are the island formations of Indonesia. A monumental but benevolent female figure embraces them with long arms, her calm gaze suggesting the personification of the land or nation. The smaller panels illustrate struggles over land, labour, and natural resources. Some scenes portray the power of collective resistance, while others show deals being made between villagers and uniformed officials. Flowing handwritten slogans and quotes fill the banner proclaiming: 'People united will never be defeated; Rice revolution; Limit private ownership of land; Unity brings prosperity.' The text here is written in Javanese, emphasising the use of the local language. The composition of multiple panels differs from Taring Padi's more continuous visual narrative banners.



Rakyat Pasti Menang, 1998
People United Will Never Be Defeated
Acrylic on canvas | 590 × 330 cm

This banner presents a dense array of fragmented scenes. Protesters with raised fists, one carrying a Molotov cocktail and the other an Indonesian flag, dominate the top of the banner. Across the piece, military figures, politicians, peasants, factory workers, and citizens are interwoven in a landscape of red and black, evoking both conflict and popular mobilisation. At the bottom, a section with text painted over in white registers how the banner was used by protesters to inscribe their own demands. Unlike the collective's later banners, this composition does not clearly distinguish protagonists from antagonists, reflecting an evolving visual language. Produced by art students and activists, most of whom studied at the Indonesia Institute of the Arts Yogyakarta, it was painted during a mass demonstration at the peak of the democratic movement in mid-1998. By December that year, Taring Padi was officially established. The banner's title captures the optimism and revolutionary hope surrounding the collapse of Suharto's New Order regime.



38 Kursi Gratis, 1999/2021
38 Free Seats
Acrylic on canvas | 300 × 285 cm

The centre of this composition features a wooden cage piled with green- and yellow-coloured pigs dressed in military uniforms. Held up by long wooden poles, the cage is surrounded by angry civilians brandishing their fists in protest and closing in around it. A banner in red at the top of the canvas translates to: 'Coalition of People's Democratic / Abolish the 38 military seats in the Parliament.' The work refers to the unelected block of parliamentary seats reserved for the Armed Forces in Indonesia. A remnant of the New Order's dictatorship which fell in 1998, the seats were finally vacated in 2004 after years of struggle. The banner on display is a remake of the original, which was lent for a political and cultural event and never returned.



Sidang Rakyat, 1999
People's Tribunal
Acrylic on canvas | 280 × 280 cm

The composition features a crowd of civilian protesters with resolute expressions pushing three hybrid human-animal figures forward: a boar in a suit, as well as a rat and a fox dressed in military uniforms. All three figures shed a tear of blood, alluding to their crimes. Their grotesque forms satirise political, military, and economic elites in Indonesia. Behind them, a people's tribunal deliberates while holding a sign with the people's demands: anti-capitalism, anti-militarism, and anti-feudalism. To the right, a blindfolded Lady Justice wields a sword and a set of scales, the symbol for fairness, impartiality, and the rule of law. A yellow slogan at the bottom reads 'Their boots must stop oppressing.' This banner embodies the collective's demands for accountability and justice during the Reformasi period.



Adili Suharto dan Para Jendralnya, 2000
Bring Suharto and His Generals to Justice
Acrylic on canvas | 290 × 290 cm

This banner depicts former dictator Suharto as a monumental figure towering over a densely populated scene of protesters including men, women, peasants and workers. The letters KKN are branded on his forehead, standing for Korupsi, Kolusi, and Nepotisme (corruption, collusion, nepotism), which characterised his three-decade rule. Hybrid human-animal figures are bound around him, representing the military figures and classes who supported and benefited from his regime. The protesters are shown pulling on ropes that are wrapped around Suharto's neck, reflecting the people's strength in numbers and their collective will to topple the dictatorship. A vivid red banner and flag cut across the monochrome composition. The work confronts the enduring legacy of Indonesia's New Order regime, condemning the lack of radical structural reform during the early Reformasi period.

Artist Biography

Taring Padi was founded in Yogyakarta in 1998 by a group of progressive art students and activists in response to the sociopolitical upheaval of the Reformasi era. The collective's commitment to anti-militarism and anti-fascism is informed by their experiences under a brutal military dictatorship. Since their founding, Taring Padi's artistic practice has been an integral part of sociopolitical and cultural actions, supporting marginalized communities and various social groups in Indonesia and globally. Their works and acts of solidarity take the form of collective creations such as large-scale banners used in street protests, woodcut prints, posters, cardboard puppets, music and performance. Their artistic mediums are reproducible and can be widely distributed, founded on their collective principle of art as a tool for education, activism, and social transformation.

Recent exhibitions include "People's Liberation" at Sale Docks in Venice in 2026, as well as "Organise – Educate – Agitate" with Cantadora Gallery in Rome in 2025. In 2024, Taring Padi presented the exhibition "Tanah Tumpah Darah / The Land Where We Spill Our Blood to Defend It" at the Griffith University Art Museum in Brisbane, showcasing a banner created in collaboration with the First Nations art collective ProppaNow. They also held a major exhibition at Framer Framed in Amsterdam, "Tanah Merdeka / Liberated Land" (2023), featuring a large banner made in collaboration with the Brazilian Jewish diaspora organization Casa do Povo and the Landless Workers' Movement (MST). In 2022, Taring Padi took part in documenta fifteen, presenting two decades of artefacts related to direct political action. Titled "Bara Solidaritas / Flame of Solidarity", the presentation in Kassel, included over 1,000 cardboard puppets created in collaboration with communities in Indonesia, the Netherlands, Germany, the United States, and Australia, who participated in collective workshops.

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