

Lumbung practices to resist and collaborate through art

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Like germinated spores of documenta fifteen, the values and practices inspired by the notion of *lumbung* continue to spread and expand beyond Kassel. Since its inception, the Indonesian collective Taring Padi, which formed part of the group of artists who applied lumbung practices for the first time in this edition, has applied the logic of cooperation and solidarity in the creations and projects that it has given impulse to in different parts of the world. This way of doing things has led them to work with multiple communities mobilised by various causes and struggles, among them the social groups and associations of the Lavapiés neighbourhood in Madrid which are at the heart of *Museo Situado* (Situated Museum), a network for collaboration in which the Museo Reina Sofía is a participant. Now, we will share part of this experience.



Museo Situado political-performative action during the Neighborhood Picnic, Museo Reina Sofía, 10th June 2023. Photo: Román Lores. Courtesy of Museo Reina Sofía.

Lumbung spores

Lumbung, an Indonesian word that refers to the rice barns that store surplus harvest as a shared community resource, was the conceptual and ethical axis of the curatorial seal that the Indonesian art collective ruangrupa bestowed on documenta fifteen. The principles related to the collective organisation, collaboration, creation and horizontal and equitable distribution of resources of the lumbung were their foundation and motor for testing other ways of making and thinking collectively

about the institutionality of art.

Conceived as a collaborative, interdisciplinary and globally oriented platform,¹ documenta fifteen and the network of lumbung artists who participated in this edition explored an alternative and sustainable model that questioned the hegemonic system of art production, not only in economic terms but also in its social, cultural and political dimensions. More than a fixed formula, they opted for a process where resources, knowledge, and ideas were shared and networks of cooperation were established under the logic of the commons. In this way, the commons were placed at the centre and extended outwards to intertwine with other possibilities. Beyond the one hundred days of the exhibition and with an expansive and future-oriented perspective, ruangrupa and the participating artistic collectives have tried to keep this model of production and collaboration alive through independent projects that continue to operate, such as the [lumbung.space](#) website, [lumbung_press](#), [lumbung_gallery](#) and [lumbung_kios](#).



Taring Padi Wayang kardus at documenta15, Kassel, July 2022. Photo: Sara Buraya Boned.

At the heart of this ecosystem are the lumbung artists and members of documenta fifteen, who have shaped an interlocal collaboration network that allows them to continue amplifying and diversifying the practice of lumbung.²

The Indonesian artistic collective Taring Padi appears in this framework. Under the motto *Bara Solidaritas: Sekarang Mereka, Besok Kita* (Flame of solidarity: First they came for them, then they came for us), Taring Padi participated in the 2022 edition with a wide variety of collectively created works that, in the form of murals, banners or more than a thousand *wayang kardus* (cardboard puppets), conveyed the demands and social struggles of various communities with whom they have worked. Beyond the controversy that the group was confronted with as a result of accusations of anti-Semitism in their artwork *People's Justice* (2002), which had to be covered and subsequently withdrawn without much space for dialogue and reflection on the context in which it was created,³ the vast diversity of works shown accounted for a long and socially committed trajectory, oriented towards putting art at the service of communities, their needs and their struggles.

Founded in December 1998 by a group of activists and art students, the Taring Padi Institute of People-Oriented Culture (Lembaga Budaya Kerakyatan [LBK] Taring

Padi) emerged as a response to the context of the sociopolitical turmoil that Indonesia experienced after the violent dictatorship of Haji Mohammad Soeharto, also known as Suharto. Based in the city of Yogyakarta, the group now known simply as Taring Padi has more than twenty-three years of history and three generations of artists⁴ whose diverse origins and backgrounds shape its multidisciplinary approach, pushing the boundaries of art to merge with political-cultural activism.

From an artistic praxis located and deeply connected to its context, the Taring Padi collective uses art as a tool for political expression which is capable of transmitting ideas, making claims and contributing to social and democratic change in communities. Organisation, education and agitation are the basic principles of its working methodologies of collective co-creation, the horizontal exchange of knowledge, trust, and the generation of alliances and collaboration networks with artists, institutions and people. Over the years, they have worked with agricultural, fishing, worker and student communities among others, both local and international, with whom they have developed a creative universe that makes visible the unhealed wounds of their country and addresses the social problems that continue to be perpetuated and that extend into different territories. The denunciation of human rights violations, militarization, the exploitation of the environment, social justice, and popular sovereignty are some of the issues they work with.



Taring Padi Wayang kardus at documenta15, Kassel, July 2022. Photo: Sara Buraya Boned.



Taring Padi Wayang kardus at documenta15, Kassel, July 2022. Photo: Sara Buraya Boned.

Within this relational framework, an encounter arose between Taring Padi and Museo Situado, the active collaboration network of activist collectives and neighbourhood associations in the Madrid neighbourhood of Lavapiés and in which the Museo Reina Sofía participates – a meeting that emerged as an art workshop, but which deeply connects with the principles and ideals that mobilise the various groups.

Machinations for radical transformation

Now within the framework of the exhibition 'Maquinaciones' (Machinations) at the Museo Reina Sofía, which explores the notion of 'machine' formulated by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze towards the end of the sixties, Taring Padi has been invited to participate. The collective forms part of the selection of artists who give accounts of the conceptual displacement that occurs today, where 'machining' becomes a fundamental axis for how to 'conspire against the established power, imagine new possible arrangements, and invent the necessary means for a radical transformation'.⁵



Taring Padi works in the exhibition
Machinations, Museo Reina Sofía, 2023. Photo:
Román Lores. Courtesy of Museo Reina Sofía.

Precisely, the Indonesian collective's artistic production is characterised by its acting as the support that makes visible and affirms the political struggles and social demands of the communities with which they work. Through the creation of banners, woodcut posters, murals, *wayang kardus* (cardboard puppets), sculptures and music, they express other ways of resisting, collaborating and contributing to social transformation through art.

From the other side, Museo Situado – which borrows its name from the concept of 'situated knowledges' developed by Donna Haraway – is an example of how the Reina Sofía tests out an alternative institutionality, situated in the present context and connected to the social, political, territorial and affective environment that embodies the Lavapiés neighbourhood, the area in which the museum is located. In a radical exercise in collaboration, Museo Situado functions as a web of neighbours and collectives, including the museum itself, which is organised and self-governed through an assembly that operates under the principles of cooperation, horizontality and co-responsibility. In other words, it is a living and organic constituent process in constant construction that is configured through listening, interpellation, affect and care.

Since 2018, during its five years of activity, Museo Situado has created a political-affective ecosystem at the centre of which are the needs, struggles and desires of those who live in the Lavapiés neighbourhood. An area where life happens (with all its problems related to gentrification, the criminalisation of migrant communities, contradictions and resistances), which has a diverse and plural social substrate and a long tradition of social activism. Through collectively decided meetings, activities, schools, and political campaigns, among others, Museo Situado seeks to influence and build a commons that, through art, contributes to transforming the social and living conditions of the neighbourhood. In a blend of social activism and cultural action, the function of art here is to connect experiences and create a channel to make visible and amplify the demands of the groups so that, through creativity and imagination, they can activate other modes of resistance.

Thus, for Museo Situado, holding workshops with artists is essential, since it makes it possible to create new connections, share knowledge and generate tools for collaboration and political advocacy through art. Along these lines, it has generated

encounters with artists from Argentina, Chile, Brazil and Spain and recently with Taring Padi. During their visit to Madrid at the beginning of June 2023, the group carried out the workshop 'Activating resistance with wayang kardus'.



Traditional Indonesian puppet used by Taring Padi in the wayang kardus workshop, Museo Reina Sofía, 2nd June 2023. Photo: Theo Prodromidis Courtesy: Theo Prodromidis.



Wayang kardus produced in the Taring Padi workshop, Esta es una Plaza, Madrid, 3rd June 2023. Photo: Theo Prodromidis Courtesy: Theo Prodromidis.

For three days, three members of three different generations of Taring Padi, Mohamed Yusuf, Sri Maryanto (Antok) and Mamox Rino, shared their experiences, knowledges and techniques for the creation of *wayang kardus*, recycled cardboard puppets that give new meaning to the shadow puppets of traditional Indonesian theatre. Developed mainly in the space of *Esta es una Plaza* (This Is a Plaza), a neighbourhood initiative that recovered an abandoned lot to transform it into a meeting place and which is one of the associations belonging to Museo Situado, the workshop became a process of collective and situated creation which invited the participants to appropriate this tool in order to express the struggles and social campaigns belonging to the Lavapiés neighbourhood.



Workshop 'Activating resistance with wayang kardus', by Taring Padi, at Esta es una Plaza, Madrid, 3rd June 2023. Photo: Constanza Yévenes Biénozobas.

Through conversation and exchange, Museo Situado members shared with the workshop's participants the three main campaigns that the assembly had decided to be the axis of the Neighbourhood Picnic (Picnic del Barrio), an emblematic annual event, which took place a week later. These were the defence of public healthcare for all, expressed by the hashtag #SanidadPúblicaYUniversal (Public Universal Healthcare); awareness against borders from the Caravana Abriendo Fronteras (Open Borders Caravan) network – #LasFronterasMatan (Borders Kill); and the demand for workplace safety for domestic and care workers – #EstasHerramientasNoSeMuevenSolás (These Tools Don't Move Themselves). These demands were the driving force behind the majority of the *wayang kardus* that were created over the weekend, although there was also space for other topics such as denouncing police violence, the environmental crisis or the digital gap. Created individually or collectively, in each puppet the idea of 'author' was diluted, because collaboration was the basis of the experience – while one person drew, another painted, cut or looked for the necessary threads to be able to articulate the movements of the puppet – in which the whole process was doing and learning together. Also, as an extension of the Taring Padi methodology, this technique promotes an inclusive approach, as anyone can participate; it is easy to do, and it is inexpensive. In this way, it dissolves the barriers of access to the arts, since communities are deeply involved in the creation process, making these works their own, with understandable and relevant messages for all people.



Workshop 'Activating resistance with wayang kardus', by Taring Padi, at Esta es una Plaza, Madrid, 3rd June 2023. Photo: Constanza Yévenes Biénozobas.

The most powerful thing is that the more than forty *wayang kardus* that were created, in a situated way, continue to have meaning and utility that extends beyond the workshop to other areas of action. As supports for the expression of the campaigns and struggles that mobilise the neighbourhood groups, the puppets were the protagonists of the 2023 Neighbourhood Picnic (Picnic del Barrio) which took place on Saturday, 10 June, in the garden of the Museo Reina Sofía. Under the slogan *Re-enchanting Lavapiés*, inspired by feminist theorist Silvia Federici's concept of re-enchanting the world, this activity recovers the garden of the museum as green space for the neighbourhood and transforms it into a site of meeting and enjoyment, as well as a site of vindication and illumination of the struggles towards a society of the commons. Similarly, in addition to being exhibited at this festive community meeting, some of the *wayang kardus* were protagonists of a political and performative activation to make this year's campaigns visible. Together with the group Fanfarria Transfeminista and the Cacharro,⁶ a mobile agitation and propaganda device of the Museo Situado's which also forms part of the 'Maquinaciones' exhibition, the puppets were carried and raised by the neighbourhood groups, to accompany their songs and speeches, while they surrounded the exterior of the museum building to later enter and break in, desecrate, and inhabit this space.



**Museo Situado and Fanfarria transfeminista
political-performative action during the
Neighborhood Picnic, Museo Reina Sofía, 10th
June 2023. Photo: Román Lores. Courtesy of
Museo Reina Sofía.**

Taring Padi also participated in the Neighbourhood Picnic (Picnic del Barrio) with the woodcut workshop 'Getting to know the struggles of the neighbourhood', where they printed T-shirts and posters. During an unplanned intervention, they drew and carved on wood the slogans of the campaigns that were the axis of this meeting, the previously mentioned #SanidadPúblicaYUniversal, #LasFronterasMatan and #EstasHerramientasNoSeMuevenSolás. In addition, as an example of how solidarity and collaboration is also the result of camaraderie and affect, Taring Padi prepared typical Indonesian food that was shared with the Picnic's team and volunteers.



**Taring Padi woodcut workshop 'Getting to know
the struggles of the neighbourhood' in the
Neighborhood Picnic, Museo Reina Sofía, 10th
June 2023. Photo: Constanza Yévenes
Biéznobas.**

As an extension of this alliance, the locally created *wayang kardus* once again were again activated, accompanying the Cacharro and the groups belonging to the Museo Situado in the protest that took place on 23 June in front of the Congress of Deputies of Spain, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Melilla massacre, in support of the *Abriendo Fronteras 2023* (Opening Borders) caravan.⁷



Activation of the Museo Situado Cacharro and the wayang kardus, on the occasion of the concentration of the caravan 'Opening borders 2023', in front of the Congress, Madrid, June 23, 2023. Photography: Emanuele Braga. Courtesy of Emanuele Braga.

This expansive experience is a radical instance of how art can be an essential part of a collaborative ecosystem, where lumbung practices and all the necessary machinations make it possible to generate encounters and connections like those of Taring Padi with the groups of Museo Situado. Through the principles of solidarity, cooperation and shared knowledge, other political-affective strategies can be imagined in order to resist, collaborate and influence the construction of a commons for social transformation through art.

Further References:

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Taring Padi, 'We Take Ownership and Responsibility': Indonesian Collective Taring Padi Reflects on the Controversy Over Their Art That Paralyzed Documenta', interview by Kate Brown, Artnet News, 10 August 2022, available at artnet.com (last accessed on 26 June, 2023).

Ruangrupa, 'Lumbung. A proposal for documenta 15', June 2019, available at lumbung.space (last accessed on 27 June, 2023).

1.

More information about documenta fifteen can be found on its official [website](https://documenta-fifteen.de).

2.

Participating artists and collectives in documenta fifteen that develop and follow the lumbung practice. Currently the lumbung members form an international and

interdisciplinary network of contemporary art, called lumbung inter-lokal. More information is available at documenta-fifteen.de (last accessed on 30 August 2023).

3.

'This work then becomes a monument of mourning for the impossibility of dialogue at this moment. This monument, we hope, will be the starting point for a new dialogue', declared the Taring Padi collective at documenta fifteen. 'On The Concealment of a Work by Taring Padi at documenta fifteen', documenta fifteen, 20 June 2022, available at documenta-fifteen.de (last accessed on 27 June 2023).

4.

Almost one hundred people have been involved in Taring Padi over the years. It was the younger members who suggested the change of name, since 'Taring Padi Institute of People-Oriented Culture' seemed to them associated with an old left-wing organisation, rigid and with strong organisational discipline. In Taring Padi, *Seni Membongkar Tirani (Art Crushes Tyranny)*, Yogyakarta: Lumbung Press, 2011.

5.

Museo Reina Sofía, *Maquinaciones*, Museo Reina Sofía, available at museoreina-sofia.es (last accessed on 27 June 2023).

6.

'El Cacharro' is a device that emerged from the Museo Situado's assembly as a response to the need for adequate support to make visible and amplify the campaigns and initiatives promoted by the collectives. With a metallic structure, its function is multipurpose, since it allows the circulation of speeches and graphics, has a sound system and adapts to transit through the streets, demonstrations or activities. For more information, visit museoreinasofia.es (last accessed on 30 August 2023).

7.

The Melilla massacre refers to the tragedy that occurred on 24 June 2022, where at least thirty-seven people died (with more than seventy-seven still missing) in their attempt to cross the border from Morocco into Spain, victims of disproportionate police violence. One year after these human rights violations, perpetrated by both the Spanish and Moroccan states, this case still remains unpunished and without a proper investigation.

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