



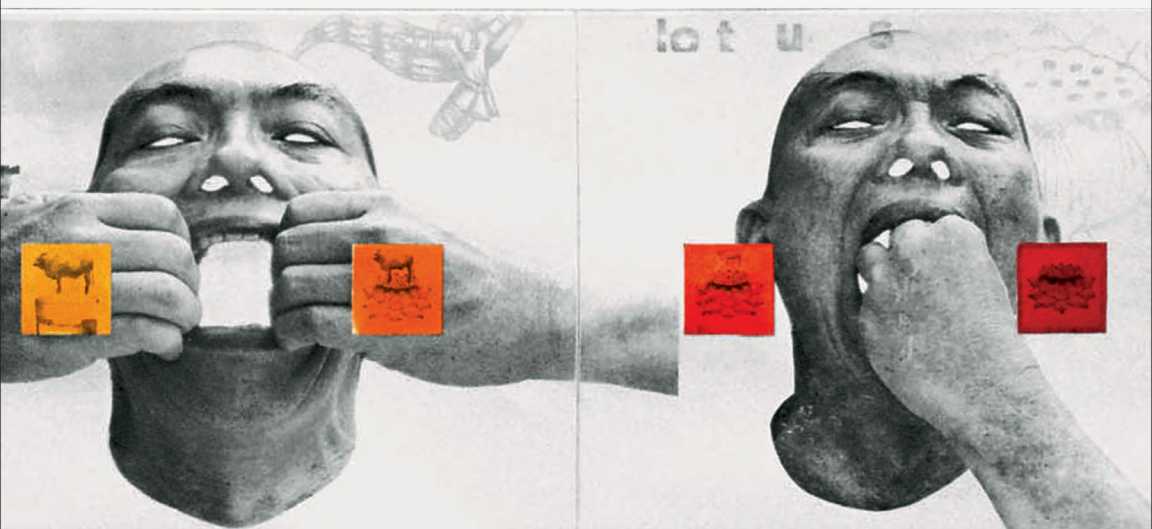
DEMANDING

DEMOCRACY,

MEDIATION, AND THE

IMAGES

IMAGE-EVENT IN INDONESIA



KAREN STRASSLER

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Duke University Press Durham and London 2020

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Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper ∞

Designed by Courtney Leigh Baker

Typeset in Minion Pro and Trade Gothic by Copperline Book Services

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Strassler, Karen, [date] author.

Title: Demanding images : democracy, mediation, and the image-event in Indonesia / Karen Strassler.

Description: Durham : Duke University Press, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019016284 (print)

LCCN 2019981100 (ebook)

ISBN 9781478004691 (paperback)

ISBN 9781478004080 (hardcover)

ISBN 978147800544 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Photography—Political aspects—Indonesia. | Photography—Social aspects—Indonesia.

Classification: LCC TR184. s66 2020 (print) | LCC TR184 (ebook) |

DDC 770.9598—dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019016284>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019981100>

Cover art: *Open Your Mouth*, 2002. Photo etching. 57 × 219 cm.

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P R E F A C E

Leila Chudori's novel, *Pulang* (2012), or *Home*, begins with a scene set in Jakarta in 1968.¹ Hananto has been in hiding, trying to elude the army's relentless pursuit of Communists and leftists after an alleged coup attempt in late 1965.² A former journalist, Hananto has spent several months working in a photo studio whose owner kindly took him in. Concealed in the darkroom, he prints the identity photographs that people need for official documents proving they are "clean" of dangerous political affiliations. When four men enter the studio and ask for him by name, the journalist, alone in the darkness, knows he has nowhere left to run. Hananto is led away and ultimately executed.

Indonesia's authoritarian New Order regime (1966–98) began with a purge of Communists and those alleged to be associated with them that left an estimated five hundred thousand to one million people dead and hundreds of thousands more imprisoned. The opening of the novel stages the terror of the regime's early years, which stifled Indonesia's once vibrant and contentious arena of public debate and initiated a panoptic dystopia in which the state's gaze penetrated into the most intimate arenas of daily life. As readers of this opening scene, we feel the claustrophobic enclosure of a regime of surveillance in which only the state's image of its citizens, epitomized in the identity photograph, can come into view.³

But in the remainder of the novel, a different visual technology emerges as a counter to the New Order's metaphorical darkroom. Lintang, the novel's young protagonist, is the child of a friend and former colleague of Hananto who was forced into exile by the coup. Born and raised in Paris, and now a college student, Lintang decides to go "home" to Indonesia to make a documentary film about the anticommunist purges that so profoundly changed her father's life and shaped her own.

It is spring 1998, and Indonesia is on the cusp of another political transition. Students are already demonstrating in the streets when Lintang ar-

rives in Jakarta to record accounts of the purges that killed her father's best friend. Her task is to document a history "erased from the pages of textbooks," a history that "has never been written."⁴ Via documentary film, she will uncover this "buried" history and open up a "place and a space for those whose voices have all this time been silenced."⁵ Lintang sets to work interviewing former prisoners, but her growing romantic relationship with Hananto's son, a passionate activist, draws her into the contemporary drama of the pro-democracy "Reformasi" movement. Lintang is there when the military opens fire on protesting students in a climactic moment that will lead precipitously to the end of the New Order regime.⁶ Despite the risks, Lintang instinctively raises her video camera to record the scene. It is a moment—of opening, of possibility, and of danger—that demands images.

Chudori's novel tracks a shift mirrored in my own research trajectory. I had planned, in my dissertation, to study how family memories embedded in personal photography collections offered historical narratives, identities, and dispositions toward the past that were suppressed under, or simply oblique to, those officially promoted by the authoritarian New Order regime. But on the very day in May 1998 that I found out I had received funding to support my research, Jakarta erupted in violent protests that quickly led to President Suharto's resignation. During my dissertation fieldwork (November 1998 to July 2000), in the immediate aftermath of the New Order regime, I was intensely aware of the explosion not only of amateur documentary film production but also of other media through which images were circulating along new, more decentralized circuits, helping to shape an emerging post-authoritarian public sphere. I was so struck by the confluence of a moment of political opening with a diversifying media landscape that when I returned from the field, the first piece I sat down to write was not part of my dissertation but the germ of what would become chapter 1 of this book.⁷ While *Refracted Visions: Popular Photography and National Modernity in Java* (2010), the book that grew out of my dissertation, examined a late colonial and post-colonial history of the making of Indonesian subjects via intimate, popular photographic practices, *Demanding Images* moves to a more public arena to think about images as events central to the formation of contested political imaginaries in an exciting but anxious time of transition.

Chudori's novel effectively captures the zeitgeist of the Reformasi moment, which would continue to color Indonesia's experiment with democracy over the next decade and a half. That Chudori's heroine is a budding filmmaker, and that the thematic of documentary in the novel links the recovery of historical memory to aspirations for democracy, is no coincidence.⁸

The medium of documentary film—with its promise of authentic truths grounded in indexical recording, its accessible mode of production, and its ability to circulate beyond state control—became emblematic of Reformasi ideals of transparency, authenticity, the free circulation of information, and popular participation.⁹ In *Pulang*, Chudori renders a shift in technologies of image making iconic of the transition from authoritarian rule to a new, more open public sphere. Her novel articulates the ways that images and the media technologies by which they are produced and circulated would become invested with pragmatic efficacy and symbolic weight in the contested envisioning of a new era of Indonesian democracy. It is this process that *Demanding Images* explores.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost I thank the many people in Indonesia whose creativity, commitment, intelligence, and humor inspired me to write these pages. It is established practice in ethnographic writing to use pseudonyms to protect the identities of those about whom we write. There are, of course, important reasons for this convention, but in this book I have more often used real names for several reasons. Because this is an ethnography of the public sphere, the events described in these pages were largely public events whose participants are a matter of public record. Many of the people about whom I write and whose ideas inform my analysis are intellectuals and professionals (artists, professors, journalists, activists, writers, and so on) who have spoken publicly about the matters they discussed with me and should be credited with the insights and images they so generously shared. Using real names also avoids one unfortunate effect of the conventional use of pseudonyms: the reinforcing of an asymmetrical relationship between ethnographer and interlocutor in which the contributions of those we study become subsumed into the authoritative voice of the anthropologist, erasing the dialogical production of ethnographic knowledge. Writing this book has been an effort to think *with*, and not merely *about*, Indonesians as they seek to imagine and realize a more democratic public sphere.

In addition to those whose names appear in the pages that follow, I wish to thank my research assistant and friend of many years, Nita Kariani Purwanti, without whom this book would not have been possible. Nita kept a steady stream of newspaper clippings, exhibition catalogues, obscure books, and other invaluable materials headed my way during the years I was unable to travel to Indonesia, helped my family settle in Yogyakarta during my sabbatical in 2013, and remains someone whose perspective I always seek. Fadjar Thufail kindly arranged sponsorship of my research by Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia in 2013. Many other friends and colleagues in Indonesia

contributed their time and insights to this project. To all of you who helped me in ways large and small, I can only say, “Terima kasih.”

At home, my greatest debt is to Mary Margaret Steedly and Patricia Spyer. A Hrdy postdoctoral fellowship at the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and the Harvard University Anthropology Department from 2003 to 2005 as part of their collaborative project, “Signs of Crisis in Southern Asia,” provided the critical intellectual space for this project’s incubation. Our many conversations over the years about images, media, and Indonesian publics profoundly enriched this book, and I am grateful for Mary and Patsy’s critical engagement with and support for this project from start to finish. Mary read the final manuscript with characteristic generosity and intelligence; I so wish she had lived to hold the finished book in her hands.

I thank my colleagues at Queens College and the CUNY Graduate Center. I am lucky to work with people I both like and respect, and I am grateful to them for making teaching, advising, and administrative work a genuinely collective endeavor. I thank my students for reminding me why our work matters. I wish especially to recognize Hazal Corak, Shima Houshyar, Zehra Husain, and China Sajadian, who insightfully commented on the manuscript as it neared completion. Chinonye Alma Otuonye ably assisted with the bibliography.

Thanks to Ken Wissoker and the skilled editors and designers at Duke University Press who ushered this book along its long journey to publication. I thank Jan Williams for expertly crafting the book’s index. I am honored to have the artist FX Harsono’s *Open Your Mouth* (2002) on the book’s cover. A striking example of a demanding image, the piece vividly questions the freedoms of the post-Suharto democratic public sphere and its consumerist media culture.

Earlier versions of several of the chapters of *Demanding Images* have appeared in print. Chapter 1 began as “Currency and Fingerprints: Authentic Reproductions and Political Communication in Indonesia’s ‘Reform Era.’” *Indonesia* 70 (2000): 71–82, and then was further developed as, “The Face of Money: Crisis, Currency, and Remediation in Post-Suharto Indonesia,” *Cultural Anthropology* 24, no. 1 (February 2009): 68–103. An earlier version of chapter 2 appeared as “Gendered Visibilities and the Dream of Transparency: The Chinese-Indonesian Rape Debate in Post-Suharto Indonesia,” *Gender and History* 16, no. 4 (2004): 689–725. Chapter 3 began as “The Multi-Media Expert, *Pakar Telematika*,” in “Figures of Modernity in Post-Suharto Indonesia,” a multiauthored essay edited by Joshua Barker and Jo-

han Lindquist in *Indonesia* 87 (Spring 2009): 35–72, and was also published as “Telecommunication and Multimedia Expert, Pakar Telematika dan Multimedia,” in *Figures of Southeast Asian Modernity*, edited by Joshua Barker, Erik Harms, and Johan Lindquist (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2013), 179–84. I thank the anonymous reviewers and editors for all of these publications. I also thank the members of audiences at Harvard University, Yale University, Brandeis University, the University of Washington, the University of California, Berkeley, the University of California, Los Angeles, Northwestern University, the CUNY Graduate Center, Leiden University, Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, and Gadjah Mada University, as well as the members of numerous conference panels who commented on papers that later became chapters.

I could not have hoped for a more generous and brilliant group of women among whom to begin this book than the members of the “Cambridge Writing Circle”: Jennifer Cole, Smita Lahiri, Ajantha Subramanian, Anne Marie Leshkovich, Christine Walley, and Janet McIntosh. At the end of the writing process, the “North Square Writing Circle,” with Omri Elisha and Ayala Fader, provided another ideal setting within which to share and refine ideas. Bookending this project, these writing groups epitomize what I most appreciate about academic life: the collaborative spirit with which we help each other become better thinkers and writers.

Many other colleagues have read drafts, responded to talks, or engaged in discussions that helped develop my thinking. I will not be able to name all, but think especially of Clarissa Adamson, Ilisa Barbash, Joshua Barker, Lucien Castaing-Taylor, Elizabeth Ferry, Pamila Gupta, Jeffrey Hadley, Rachel Heiman, James Hoesterey, Carla Jones, Brian Larkin, Doreen Lee, Johan Lindquist, William Mazarella, Rosalind Morris, Penelope Papailias, Christopher Pinney, Anupama Rao, Geoffrey Robinson, and Danilyn Rutherford. I am especially grateful to Webb Keane, who has contributed in innumerable generative ways to this book and who has, from the days of writing my dissertation until the completion of this book, continued to challenge me to be more rigorous in my thinking and more assertive in my claims. Mani Limbert and Laura Kunreuther have been with this project every step of the way, helping me to imagine its architecture and think through its granular details. As she has done since the days of writing our undergraduate theses together, Rachel Sherman helped me to clarify and hone my arguments. I thank my dear friends Bibi Calderaro and Julio Grinblatt for lending their artists’ eyes and helping me to think creatively about the book’s design. At a critical juncture when I had despaired of ever finishing the book, Zeynep

Gürsel pushed, cajoled, and emboldened me to put my work out into the world. Our conversations about photography keep me excited about what I do.

Over the long years of work on this book, friends and family members patiently listened to my evolving descriptions of the project and provided much needed respite from it. The period spent writing *Demanding Images* coincided with the most consuming phase of parenting (indeed, it strikes me that the book's title may gesture to the way the book so often compelled my attention amid the competing demands of family life). I might never have completed it if not for the loving and capable women who helped us care for our two sons over these years, especially Lorna Motilal, Indra Motilal, Basha Smolen, Novy Linasari, and Tracy Sheffield. My parents, Robert and Toni, my brother Matthew, and everyone else I consider family, continue to make my world as secure and happy a place as one could hope for in these times. Leo and Caleb have filled the space around this book with vibrant life, and Dave's kindness, humor, curiosity, and infectious optimism buoy me at every turn.

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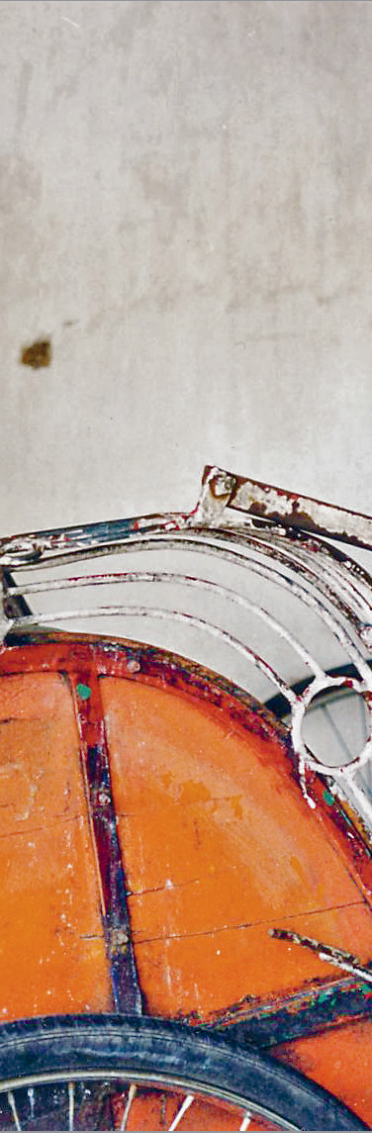
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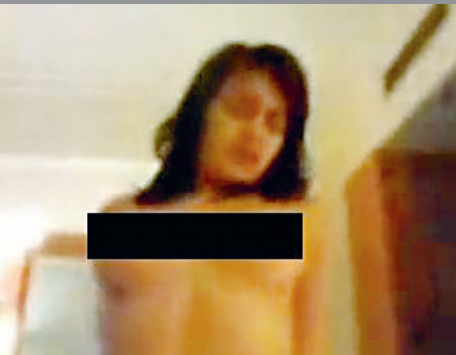


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Aksi Damai Menentang Pornografi





Arbain Rambey @arbainrambey

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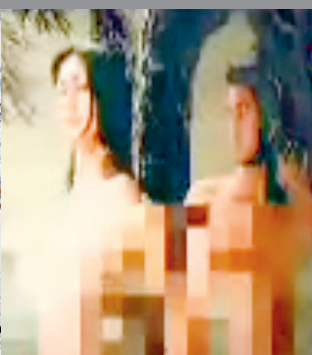










PLATE 1. Typifying the layered and dialogic aesthetic of street art, this wall features street art by multiple artists, including Digie Sigit, Love Hate Love, and Mosters Logos (see chapter 5). Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 2. *Becak* (pedicab) driver reading a newspaper while waiting for clients, with faded money sticker featuring Megawati Sukarnoputri (see chapter 1). Another version of the sticker appears below, plate 8. Yogyakarta 1999. Photo by the author.

PLATE 3. “My era was better, wasn’t it? Hah!” street art mural by Here Here. This riposte to the popular Suharto image (see plates 11 and 25) was part of a collaborative anticorruption mural (see introduction and chapter 5). Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 4. “Scribbles” on the surface of an urban residence (see chapter 5), Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 5. Widely circulated stills from a sex scandal involving a member of Parliament and a singer, 2006 (see chapter 3). From <https://windede.com/2006/12/04/kesialan-sempurna-yahya-maria/>.

PLATE 6. Still from a television news report, “Controversy: Nude Photos of Anjas-Isabel,” showing inset detail from Pinkswing Park (see chapter 4). The report aired on the SCTV crime and entertainment show *Kritis: Kriminal & Selebritis (Critic: Criminal and Celebrity)*. From <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3v5VI4ti1g> (posted February 10, 2006; accessed September 30, 2013).

PLATE 7. Tweeted crowd-selfie, from the Two Fingers Salute Concert, Jakarta, July 4, 2014. The text reads in part: “Last night I truly got goose bumps and nearly cried, seeing the people who all showed up voluntarily” (see conclusion).

PLATE 8. Widely circulated money sticker featuring Megawati Sukarnoputri, 1999. Her father, Sukarno, first president of Indonesia and nationalist icon, appears as the watermark authenticating the bill (see chapter 1). Collection of the author.

PLATE 9. Mural by Alit Ambara, Samuel Indratma, Ong Harry Wahyu, and Butet Kartaradjasa with the multiplied face of slain human-rights leader Munir Said Thalib. Munir was assassinated in 2004. The mural’s imagery recalls the poem “Flowers and Wall” by poet-activist Wiji Thukul, who was disappeared by the New Order regime in 1998: “If we were flowers / you are the wall / but in the body of the wall we have spread seeds” (see introduction and chapter 5). Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 10. “Refuse to Forget” Munir posters by Antitank (see introduction and chapter 5), Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 11. Books about politics and corruption for sale in a bookstore reflect the flourishing of publishing after 1998 and the centrality of corruption as a theme of public discourse (see introduction and chapter 3). Note the “How’s it going?” Suharto image on the cover of one of the books. Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 12. “Return Them!” poster, demanding the return of missing Reformasi activists (see chapter 2), Yogyakarta, 1998. Photo by the author.

PLATE 13. Comparison of photographs indicating that the model Sophia Latjuba was not actually nude in a controversial photograph taken by Hani Moniaga and published on the cover of the magazine *Popular* (see chapters 3 and 4). From “Beda, Foto Sensual dan Porno, analisis RM Roy Suryo,” *Kedaulatan Rakyat*, July 18, 1999.

PLATE 14. “Is There Any Love Left in Indonesia?” Street art by Abimanyu. Framed by a tangle of graffiti, a mural shows a fearful young girl crouching between the silhouettes of security forces on one side and criminal gangs on the other. Not long after this photo was taken, graffiti encroached on the image itself (see chapter 5). Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 15. Arrested for causing a traffic jam during a protest action, students turn their appearance in court into a visual protest against Suharto’s ongoing impunity. This image of students masked as a smiling Suharto appeared as an illustration for several news stories (see chapter 1). From “Luhut MP Pangaribuan Soal Topeng di Persidangan: Wibawa Peradilan Telah Runtuh,” *Kompas*, June 25, 1999.

PLATE 16. A severed foot floats amid partially obscured graffiti tags, one example of the impossibility of parsing “scribbles” (*corat-coretan*) from “art” (see chapter 5). Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 17. An image allegedly of the actress Sukma Ayu, to which a censoring mark has been added. It was part of a series of intimate sexual images, said to originate from a cell phone, that circulated widely in 2004. The images’ authenticity and public circulation became a matter of public debate and scandal (see chapter 3). From www.sukma-bjah.cjb.net (accessed August 24, 2004).

PLATE 18. A Muslim women’s group demonstrating against pornography at the Hotel Indonesia roundabout in Jakarta (see chapter 4). Such protests, images of which were widely reproduced on television and in newspapers, were frequent in the years leading up to the passage of the 2008 Pornography Law. From “Aksi Damai Menentang Pornografi,” *Kompas*, August 12, 2005. Photo by Kompas/Agus Susanto.

PLATE 19. Tweet by photographer Arbain Rambey showing Jay Subyakto photographing presidential candidate Jokowi’s campaign concert and the resulting photograph, July 5, 2014. The caption reads: “This is Jay Subyakto’s position at the moment he took the photograph” (see conclusion).

PLATE 20. Newspapers for sale, Yogyakarta, 2013 (see introduction). Photo by the author.

PLATE 21. Still from a television news report on the Pinkswing Park “pornography” case, showing images of Anjasmara and Isabel Yahya that have been pixelated to censor their apparent nudity (see chapter 4). From “Anjasmara dan Abel Diperiksa Polisi,” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OiwonjQBHAI> (posted February 5, 2006; accessed September 30, 2013).

PLATE 22. Jokowi and his crowd, Two Finger Salute Concert, Jakarta, July 4, 2014 (see conclusion). Photo by Jay Subyakto, reproduced with permission.

PLATE 23. A playful elephant emerges from a palimpsest of urban inscriptions, Yogyakarta, 2013 (see chapter 5). Photo by the author.

PLATE 24. A street banner proclaims, “Eradicate *Preman* [Thugs/Criminal Gangs], including those who wear the mask of religion, down to their roots. —Yogyakarta against Violence and against Premanism” (see chapter 5). Yogyakarta 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 25. T-shirts for sale on the street. One features an iconic image of Indonesia’s nationalist hero, Sukarno, who was president from 1945 until 1966. The other shows General Suharto, who removed Sukarno from office and ruled as president from 1966 to 1998. The image of the waving Suharto reads, “How’s it going? My era was better, wasn’t it?” (see introduction). Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.

PLATE 26. During his presidential campaign in 2014, Jokowi was often alleged to be a puppet of more established and powerful figures, particularly Megawati Sukarnoputri, leader of the Democratic Indonesia Party for Struggle and daughter of former president Sukarno. This ludic meme visually literalizes the idea of Jokowi as Megawati’s puppet (see conclusion); compare Sukarno as the power behind Megawati in the equally ludic, but less cynical, Megawati money sticker (plate 8 and chapter 1).



PREVIOUS PAGE

This mural presents multiple images of the face of slain human rights activist Munir Said Thalib within a composition that suggests organic growth and proliferation (see also figure I.15 and plate 9). Mural by Alit Ambara, Samuel Indratma, Ong Harry Wahyu, and Butet Kertaradjasa. Yogyakarta, 2013. Photo by the author.
