

OH BROTHER OCTOPUS

Director's note

Most of the Bajo sea nomads have settled in houses on stilts in the Malay Archipelago. When I was visiting the Kaledupa Island, one of the first things I learnt was the legend of the Octopus. The locals believe that when a mother gives birth, if her child is a 'chosen one' then she also gives birth to a twin brother in the form of an octopus who becomes their life-long companion, communicating with the child through dreams.

In the day to day reality of living on a remote island, I also saw that some of the community members were forced to hunt the octopus in order to sell it and make living. I was drawn to this phenomenon of how the functions of a capitalist civilization have reached the shores of the most remote communities of Indonesia and have impacted on its culture.

During this time, I was living in Indonesia for a year and was mostly based in Jakarta. Compared to Wakatobi Islands, the mega city appeared to me like a dystopic, urban environment, where avoiding pollution and traffic takes up a big part of the day. Despite this apocalyptic environment people still hunt and gather, only now it is for rubbish instead of sea urchins.

Recently the Indonesian Government gave way to a 40 billion Dollar project that aims to build a giant sea wall 20km out in the ocean, off the coast of Jakarta. Dozens of artificial islands will be constructed. It is a move back to living on the ocean. But who will be able to afford this new artificial existence?

For the rubbish-hunting men of Jakarta, this new start remains an untouchable way of life.