
nuntun
lead
이끌다
nata
hold
잡다
behold
바라보다
nonton

Nuntun, Nata, Nonton

There are three Javanese words for what inherited wisdom needs in order to keep travelling: *tuntunan*, how it teaches; tatanan, how it is held in order; *tontonan*, how it comes to be seen. The vocabulary belongs most clearly to wayang, though the challenge is common to any inheritance of knowledge. All three are nouns for what an action leaves behind. In this pavilion, they are returned to their verbs. ikkibawiKrrr (established 2021, South Korea) and Aditya Novali (born 1978, Indonesia) meet across that turn, investigating how forms of wisdom survive, who holds authority over them, and what they become when released. *Nuntun* is teaching by accompaniment rather than instruction, and only for as long as someone is doing it. *Nata* is the arranging, and the authority that comes with it. *Nonton* is left to you.

Wisdom no longer held by a single keeper is not lost. It waits to be met by whoever arrives ready to receive it. This pavilion holds a door open for the length of a visit, so that we may still belong while everything else changes.

Nuntun

—to be led where return is possible

Knowledge holds its form once written down and waits to be retrieved. Wisdom behaves differently. How does what we know become something we live by? It is earned in the receiving and embodied in the doing, remade slightly by each relationship that carries it. In an era when there has never been more to know, or less time in which anything is allowed to reach us, the difficulty is no longer access but staying long enough. Time alone teaches nothing. Receptivity is cultivated only by returning to something and remaining with it, until wisdom registers and can be handed on, from one body to another.

Javanese has a verb for this kind of remaining: *nuntun*, to lead by the hand, an action that can be done neither at a distance nor alone. ikkibawiKrrr were on the receiving end of it before they were anything else. For their field research in the Lore Lindu highlands of Central Sulawesi, a curator from Palu and an anthropologist led them for more than six hours over roads that barely exist, to megalithic remains raised between two and three thousand years ago. The carvers are unknown and their purposes have gone with them, yet what continues is the repetition of the ordinary. Villagers farm the land the stones stand in and know them by name. *Palindo, Tadulako, Baula* the buffalo. They pass them daily and go on telling their stories, and the stones have remained because one villager's day goes by them, and then the next day does the same. Nothing was preserved here; what continues is the passing itself. The collective defines a place as somewhere relationships, memories and time accumulate. Return makes a place, and wisdom lives nowhere else.

Archaeology has long used frottage to record surface relief, in as much detail as it will give, producing a document to be examined afterwards. ikkibawiKrrr practise it otherwise, as "rock n' feel," a term of their own for a gesture closer to keeping company. In *Rock n' Feel_the Way* (2026) we watch them lay hanji over weathered stone and work it with charcoal, the crossing fibres of the paper letting it enter every contour without tearing. Each rub is immediate. They theorise nothing in advance of doing it and amplify nothing afterwards to make it legible. As we follow their hands, we see that they do not draw but accompany, slowing where a contour runs

deep, and pressing harder where the stone gives less. The marks come out at the pressure the meeting produced, and are left at that. What surfaces on the paper is not what they set out to make, but what was there to be met. One cannot be led while holding a map.

The same holds for the journey as for the sheet. Alongside the Sulawesi rubbings are others taken on a separate journey home, from the Mullyang-ri petroglyphs in Sangju. Here the collective returned to a country where ancestral traces sit at a greater remove from daily life. These carvings lie far from any village and are kept as visited heritage rather than lived alongside. Still, nothing had to be found for the going to matter.

Walking in a Dead-End Cave (2026), made with the musician Taehyun Choi, carries the same gesture underground. The tunnel was left unfinished during the Japanese occupation, damaged again as an armoury in the Cold War, and later filled at its far end so that it now stops short; its walls remain covered in chisel marks, thousands of strikes stopped mid-work. Inside, ikkibawiKrrr and Choi pace its length and blow into balloons, which give no note anyone chooses and last exactly as long as the air does. The sounds are taken by contact microphone and left as they arrive, shifting as the players move. The tunnel stops and nothing legible comes back. The practice was never premised on an answer, but on the company of a place that lets us in and allows us to stay.

In their search for a sense of place and what returning to one might mean, ikkibawiKrrr have not settled the question. They have made a practice of it, and they continue to go back, led to where return remains possible. It is a journey that works only for whoever is willing to arrive not knowing what for, and to go again.
ikkibawiKrrr (established 2021, South Korea) is a visual research band consisting of Gyeol Ko and Jieun Cho. Their artistic approach is informed by the traits of moss, which expands its world by interacting closely with its surroundings along the thin boundary between air and soil.

Nata

—to hold by means of letting go

Every piece of wisdom that reaches us arrives in an arrangement someone has put it in. Before it becomes a tool for moral and social instruction, whether spoken, sung, carved, or printed, it is given a sequence: one word before another, this part at the opening and that one withheld until the end.

Nata is the Javanese verb for that act: to hold things in relation, deciding what stays and what goes away. It is also a Javanese noun for king: to arrange is to hold authority over what is arranged. Aditya Novali has held that authority. From the age of seven he trained as a *dalang cilik*, a child puppet master in wayang, Indonesian shadow theatre; in 1989 he performed alone at the presidential palace before a formal state audience, commanding every movement on the screen and every character's voice. He learned that position early and from the inside, observing how much narrative a single pair of hands can keep. He has not been a *dalang* for a long time.

Novali, like most Indonesians, is also familiar with the stories of *Kancil*, an Indonesian fable passed through bedtime stories, shadow puppets, and school books, arranged and rearranged for centuries as wisdom. *Kancil* is a mouse deer: the size of a hare, with no antlers, claws or fangs to fight with. He convinces the Tiger that a python is the king's magical belt and a giant hornet's nest his sacred gong. He persuades a row of hungry crocodiles to line up so that he may count them, and crosses the river on their backs. He tells the Elephant the sky is falling; the Elephant drops into a pit for shelter, and *Kancil* climbs out on its back. He is a thief, caught stealing cucumbers and talking his way past the farmer's dog, yet he is handed down to children as a survivor, praised for the wit that carries him through the forest.

The fable has never settled this moral ambiguity; each iteration settles it on the fable's behalf, and the more fixed the form, the longer the settlement holds. One of them has been holding up a ceiling for a hundred years. In the central light court of the Koloniaal Instituut in Amsterdam (today the Wereldmuseum), the Dutch sculptor Louis Vreugde cut this fable into the stone capitals of the gallery pillars, while a commissioned book by G.B. Hooyer, *Dwerghert-Verhalen (Kantjil-Fabelen) uit den*

Oost-Indischen Archipel, described each scene and fixed the order in which they were to be read.

The order of a story can be held; wisdom cannot. It does not arrive because it has been delivered, but when we are ready for it. In *Dear Kantjil* (2026), Novali builds pillars of his own to read the fable again with eyes that can take in the whole of it. On each capital, where Vreugde's carvings would have been, sits a line Novali has cut himself, deliberately short: *When a lie is nurtured long enough, it changes its name into policy*. His childhood hero is no longer simply brain triumphing over brawn; the same scenes now hold several lessons at once, and none cancels the others.

Where Vreugde's pillars are stone and carry a ceiling, Novali's are rigid metal sheathed in transparent panels, and carry nothing. They let you watch others finding their way at their own pace. At the base of each, a paperweight holds down a stack of blank paper. The weight is made of letters, the forest's last correspondence to *Kancil*, written by Novali in the voices of the animals left on the other side of *Kancil*'s trick. He has worked over them: inked, sanded to a blur, overlaid with further text, papered across. No two are obscured the same way, what he has understood of this fable came to him by a different road each time.

The blank paper sits underneath, so the weight has to be lifted before a sheet can be taken. Visitors may write what has not resolved: the question that keeps returning, the thing still not understood. Folded, the page becomes a plane and crosses the space. In that letting go it becomes *nata*: the arranging held in the fold and given up in the throw. It is neither kept nor sent, it lands where it lands. To set a thing down is not to lose it, but to leave it somewhere it can wait. Whatever wisdom follows will be what you were ready to receive, once the page has left your hand.

Aditya Novali (born 1978, Surakarta, Indonesia) is an architect by training, attentive to structure, space, and construction. Addressing boundaries, identity, and urban life, his work interacts with the viewer and transforms with each viewing.

16th Gwangju Biennale: Indonesia Pavilion

NUNTUN, NATA, NONTON

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