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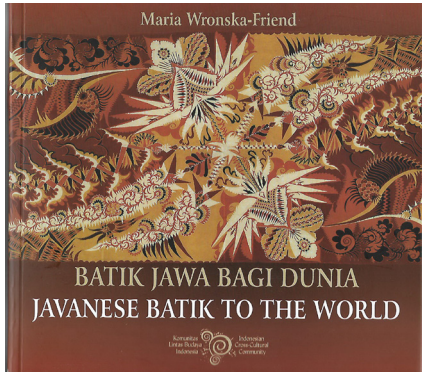
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Maria Wronska-Friend, *Batik Jawa bagi dunia - Javanese batik to the world*. Translated into Indonesian by Nilawati Hadisantosa and Aniesa N. Achjuman. Jakarta: Komunitas Lintas Budaya Indonesia (Indonesian Cross-Cultural Community), 2016, vi + 235 pp. ISBN 978-602-99212-7-4. Price: EUR 35 (softcover).



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Batik is a process to make designs on textiles by wax either drawn by hand or printed with metal stamps. This colour resist wax technique can be found in many countries, but it has been developed and reached its perfection in Indonesian Batik. Batik which

is developed in Indonesia has its own philosophical values, and it has been acknowledged by UNESCO in October 2009 as one of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since then, people have started to consider it as an art which has to be developed and documented in a written form. There are a variety of books on batik which discuss various functions and meanings of batik patterns and themes on batik fabrics and also catalogues of batik patterns that have been published. However, the book which thoroughly examines the influence of batik outside Indonesia both as a textile with its main function as part of fashion and as a theme and inspiration for artists is only this book, *Batik Jawa bagi dunia - Javanese Batik to the world* written by Maria Wronska-Friend. The book explores the uniqueness as well as the merits of Indonesian batik as fabric which is worn by royal families in the past and also by common people. Later on, its function was broader and it was used as decorations in various ornaments. Moreover, this book portrays how batik, as a commodity developed in the Dutch colonial era, has become a commodity that the Dutch brought to Africa. It also shows how batik art (patterns and themes) has influenced Vienna Secession, an art movement which incorporates fashion and architecture in *Gesamtkunstwerk* or 'total work of art' in Vienna. Textile and fashion design were other significant areas in the Viennese workshop's concept of an architectural environment as a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (Skrypzak and Copeland Buenger 2003).

Wronska-Friend explains that the influence of batik in Vienna Secession movement can be seen from the products of Wiener Werkstätte (Viennese Workshop) that is a workshop initiated by two artists Josef Hoffman and Koloman Moser. The characteristics of their work are modern and transgressing the boundaries of nations. It is also decorative as shown on the textile and its similar products, such as wallpaper or other decorative items including postcards. Their work is considered as the representation of modern art which

combines different art styles including folk art. Maria Wronska-Friend gives a detailed explanation of the development of batik patterns in the work of the artists in Wiener Werkstätte. Originally from Java, these patterns influence and even become the source of inspiration for European artists producing Javanism in European art in a few decades in the early twentieth century.

The interest of a Dutch artist, Carel Lion Cachet, in 1892 to produce a batik patterned fabric in Europe for the first time, according to Wronska-Friend, initiated the production of batik in Europe. The natural colouring in Java was too difficult to be copied in the Netherlands because of the lack of materials there. Every country in Europe has developed batik with various techniques depending on its condition and situation. Batik is so popular in Europe that it has created "Batikomania" wave (p. 58) in Germany, and it has been widely practiced there. Moreover, in Germany, a glass *canting* (a pen-like tool used for the batik-making process) has been made to make it easier for Europeans to produce hand-drawn batik. Batik is also developed in Poland because there were Polish artists who studied at Wiener Werkstätte and returned home to develop batik art in Poland. Batik in Europe becomes the main focus of this book, as shown by the deep research in its history in Europe. Those batik products of European workshops still could be seen in many renowned museums.

Furthermore, this book also discusses the influence of Indonesian batik in Africa, but the batik fabric developed in Africa is the stamped or machine-printed batik and mostly used in the garment industry. The book also examines how batik interacts with India, a country which, according to some researchers, might be the place from which batik was originated. Batik was brought back to India by a great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore, who was so impressed with Javanese cultures, such as its dances and process of making batik, brought batik to India and taught students how to make batik in an education centre and his art workshop. Batik made by his students was a beautiful blend of the technique of making batik and Indian pattern. All of this happened in Santiniketan, which is a city founded by Rabindranath Tagore's father, who had an education-for-all concept. Art was a compulsory subject, so Javanese dances and batik were included in the university's curriculum in Santiniketan. The last chapter is about batik in Australia, in this case batik as an alternative for Aborigines in Australia to create art on fabrics. Aboriginal original patterns and themes are drawn on a piece of cloth.

This book by Wronska-Friend indeed provides plenty of data and authentic photos of batik from various countries. She manages to show an incredible interaction in batik as an intercultural artwork. However, this book has somewhat narrow angle when it uses the information, probably obtained from batik workshops in Yogyakarta and Solo. These workshops were organized in co-operations with batik artists from Africa and Australia. It would be interesting if the book also explores the interaction of Indonesian batik with ASEAN countries. The only Asian country mentioned in the book is Japan. There is a brief discussion of batik in Japan on page 89, although

the interactions of Asian cultures in fact are more intense. Nonetheless this book has opened our eyes to the fact that Indonesian Batik has inspired artists around the world with its techniques and undoubtedly its “distinctive visual vocabulary” (p. 2).

REFERENCE

Joann Skrypzak and Barbara Copeland Buenger. 2003. *Design; Vienna 1890s to 1930s*. Madison, Wis: Elvehjem Museum of Art.