I landed in Makassar on the 8th of August, and went straight to Riwanua, a collective based in Makassar where Mirwan Andan and other friends geneously hosted me for my time in Makassar. Andan is part of the Indonesian collective Ruangrupa, co-founder of Riwanua, Musyawarah Arsip, and at least 10 other initiatives. We caught up on common friends, interests, and making conversation about Makassar and Riwanua, as they picked me from the airport, along with his son, Rilau, who arguably is one of the most enthu bollywood fans I have ever met, haha. Punjabi MC, Daler Mehendi, Kumar Sanu, and other songs were played, sung, as part of every consequent car ride from Riwanua to many places within Makassar.













Images from Riwanua, Makassar







Candu and Ian at Riwanua, Makassar







These are some of the images in Riwanua space. While physical spaces like this are probably anomalies and not the status quo even within indonesia (since its difficult to be able to afford one generally without support, as I learnt from several younger collectives), it was really fascinating to see how a collective space, with people moving in and out, yet living together, animate the way conversations, work, and leisure tied into each other. Each member of the collective, irrespective of age, gender, or class background had a sense of ease. Of course, the conditions for them to claim that space as their own, had been deliberately created. It really made me think of the invitations that are sometimes unsaid, which don't need to be explicit, yet are made to be felt. The space has everything: Rooms, library, sitting space, kitchen, veranda, projection room, tons of common area. So many activities unfolding simultaneously- people are working, watching movies, smoking, eating, and just having a good time. I met several friends here: Ian, Harry, Deli, Unu, Rahmat, Khadafi, Candu; Ian is a historian, majoring in ecological histories around Indonesia, Khadafi is pursuing a bachelors in International relations, Candu is an artist working with textiles and ecology, Deli is an experimental film maker, and so on and so forth. Each of them is interested in different things, yet the possibility of this space, and the transgressive nature of art, brings them together. Over the next few days, all these friends showed me incredible hospitality, and helped me know more about the culture, the artistic scenario in Indonesia, its history, and of course, as always, great food and company. Space-making was something that was natural to them, made possible from an internalised and felt choreography of care and effort — mostly the same people making food for everyone, taking care of the outside chores, and driving the rest of the collective across events in the city and so on and forth—these different roles were taken by different people actively, not without disagreements but with mutual respect and friendship, while actively maintaining the importance of having such a space.



Evening Nongkrong session, Riwanua











Over the next few days, I had several conversations with Andan, Khadafi, and other friends about wider political alignments, broader post-colonial frameworks, and protests unfolding in both India and Indonesia. I slowly realised how little we are taught about wider Southeast Asian nations, how they intertwine with our own history and culture within our pedagogic systems— of course, extending to artistic trajectories. Even within the most progressive curricula, one rarely sees any mention of artists beyond the Indian and European contexts. It mostly extends to a few examples from China, maybe Japan, but seldom to places like Indonesia, Vietnam, Brunei, etc. We discussed various platform options that could enable these exchanges and hope to work on them in the coming months. I learnt from Andan, of his projects in collaboration with other people, which are looking at both South-South collaborations, as well as the post-colonial negotiations and diaspora in Indonesia itself. H-M-C, a project co-initated by Mirwan Andan, Iswanto Hartono, and Hans Van Houwelingen; looks at History-Memory-Commemoration as an active category, and traces various histories of colonial violence, monuments, as well as various traditions, customs, and practices which have co-existed and continue to persevere from the indigenous Bugis culture. This is a 8 film project, out of which 4 works have been made, each corresponding to different areas in Indonesia. Musyawarah Arsip, another initiative co-founded by Mirwan Andan, Nurul Muthmainnah, Fahmi Sukarta, Ian Adrian focuses on neglected and endangered archives that are closely related to social, political and cultural events in South Sulawesi reigon- ranging from Diaspora, histories of migration, climate and ecological archives, social movements, sports, and cultural events. In the coming months, I hope to be an active collaborator on the project, facilitating research around the diaspora from India and Pakistan who migrated during and post-colonial eras, who have settled in Makassar and the wider South Sulawesi region.

One of the key interlocutors, within this project, who has been collecting artefacts from families belonging to the Chinese, Indian, Pakistani diaspora is Anca, who runs the Celebes Vintage Gallery. His home is home to an incredible amount and variety of artefacts, including radios, signs, trunks, watches, photographs, cameras, gramophones, fans, glasses, locks, plates, usually discarded by the second or third

generation of these immigrant families. Anca considers them to be important archives, for not only cause of preservation, but also as objects with their own material, migratory and cultural histories. These objects, also remain windows through which we can get an idea as to how these people adjusted into Makassar, and furthermore, influenced culture, food, and customs in Makassar itself. During our conversations, I learned that his wife's father migrated here from present-day Pakistan, near Hoshiarpur. Upon meeting his wife and her mother, I shared some of the partition stories my grandmother and grandfather have passed on to me, while listening to theirs. We had an intense discussion regarding the partition, arriving at questions of retracing: Were there people who were interested in retracing their roots, and if so, has someone done it? Furthermore, if most of the people who migrated here were from undivided punjab, how do they see partition, or do they not? Amidst finding objects, stories, and other methods to gather information, have conversations and gather archival materials, it was heartwarming to see, how much this collection mattered to both Anca and his family. I also was inspired by Andan's ability to mobilise multiple agents, with multiple stakes and bring them together to collaborate, and think of convergences where their mutual interests meet. We later also visited Anca's exhibition in the mall in central Makassar, where objects were displayed as a part of a larger archive- with information indexes, larger histories, as well as geopolitical tracing of events around the world pertaining to these objects. It was wonderful to see the various lives of this collection.



Visit to Anca's House, Makassar













Images from Anca's House and Archive, Makssar





Post this visit, Khadafi arranged to introduce me to SOP- Sindikat Otak Plastik Art Collective. A collective of young artists, curators, and writers, comprising of This collective was placed in one of the member's house, Riyan, who generously hosted us with delicious food, from what seems to be an endless supply of litres and litres of palm sugar coffee. Part of an intricate network between many collectives in Makassar, they recently showed at the Thailand Biennale along with Musyawarah Arsip, as part of Koneksi Tamanlrea. Khadafi, of course, was an immense help throughout this evening, translating most of what we talked; from understanding how Indonesia adopted Islam, to indigenous Bugis culture and traditions which have survived, bollywood songs, current Indian cinema, Thai horror movies, what artists talk about when they gather, art history in Indonesia, open studios, researching in Bahasa Indonesia, etc. With waves of fruit cuttings, impromptu Sambal making with raw sweet and sour mango and Durian candies we got talking about the Leang Leang caves, the second oldest caves in the world with drawings, and how that has changed the landscape of consciousness, art, as well as the idea of the decolonial within the South East Asian discursive landscapes. Amidst wonderful company, and food, we made plans to visit these caves, about one and half hour from Riwanua, to see these drawings in person. Towards the end of the evening, we shared resources in form of pdfs, YouTube videos, papers and works produced by the collective; in an attempt to create a larger network of sharing and understand both Indian and Indonesian art paradigms through history, and in the now.



Images from balcony, Sindikat Otak Plastik Art Collective









Images from balcony, Sindikat Otak Plastik Art Collective



I had the full nongkrong experience with nice afternoon naps mixed with work and palm sugar coffee at Andan's house, where he graciously hosted me and other friends from Riwanua everyday for lunch. In Indonesia, men generally move in with their in laws. The house we see here is his mother in law's house, designed by his brother in law, who is an architect. The house itself has been built with materials which are not commonly in use anymore- mostly replaced by concrete. Every day, around 12:30, we had lunch, where Andan's mother in law introduced me to various local dishes and staples. It was a rich learning experience, talking with Andan and Khadafi, on the history of ingredients, their class associations, and how it has evolved with western influence. Of course, aligned came discussions around survivability of artists, and how people generally continue to stay in their parents' house, and continue their practice- since the housing situation in Indonesia continues to get unfeasible for majority population. Throughout our days spent together, we talked of fundings structures and mobilities; the importance of geographical mobility, and of course, its limits. It is during these sessions, that we discussed things which are drafts, maybe even less formed, brewing frameworks which can create moments of exchange between South Asian and South East Asian practitioners. As I write this report, Andan, I, and some other friends are trying to initiate an exchange program, where people can be hosted an Riwanua in Makassar, while practitioners from Makassar can find their way to India. These can also be supplemented with low-resource (capital) frameworks, capable of adapting to the precarious funding and mobility circumstances which plague our time.



Andan MIL's House, Makassar



Library at Andan's MIL's house, Makassar











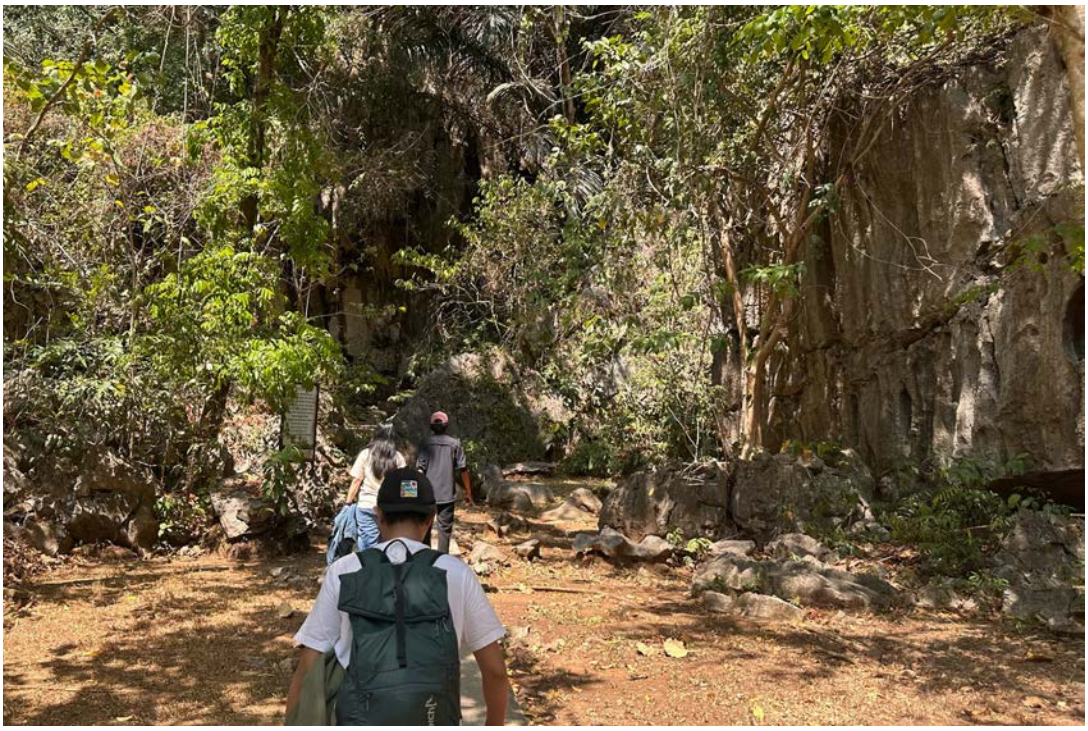




The following day we made our way to the Leang Leang caves; making stops in between as my ass hurt from sitting so long on a scooty , iced tea flowing in my veins. Reaching Leang Leang caves, I felt the landscape completely swallowed me— it wasn't particularly green, but rather, was a deep, rich yellow. I was discussing with Khadafi of a reel which had come across in my feed a few weeks ago, talking about the work of Harini Nagendra. Nagendra talks about how the association of a healthy, thriving climate ecosystem with 'greenery' , i.e green as a color, is a colonial hangover- which supplanted and sacrificed natural habitats for catering to the european idea of greenery, which was unironically, only green. The landscape at Leang Leang caves wasn't green- but a summery ochre yellow, only accentuated by huge mountains, where the caves were situated, made of porous black rock. At the very entrance itself, we met two friends, Liu, pursuing her masters in contemporary curation from Taiwan, and Jing Qian Tan from Malaysia, who is an anthropologist, also interested in artistic forms, particularly publications. We were also joined by a French evolutionary biologist- Cristophe Thebaud, who is a professor at the University of Toulouse. Together, we embarked on seeing two different caves.



Leang Leang Caves, Maros Pangkep Karst, South Sulawesi



The first cave, has a sillhoute of hands painted by spray painting a mix of red oxides and water, visible in the image below. Cristophe, who has been extensively working in the Malay region around the same subject, introduced us to the dating techniques; which is, that they have no accurate method to measure the date of the painting, but instead carbon date the limestone which had covered the painting organically over time- preserving them enough that they were visible to us today. There were also several fossilised sea shells, indicating clearly, that at some point in history, these rocks used to be underwater. Scientists have been able to find traces of fire, from carbon dating the ash surrounding some of the sea shells, which might have been either eaten/ or used for decorative purposes.



Cave 1, Leang Leang Caves, Maros Pangkep Karst, South Sulawesi

We then moved onto the next site, which was a network of caves. After a small, slippery hike, we saw beautifully rendered and (thankfully) well preserved representations of wild boars, with hand sillhoutes right besides them, as if a signature before the idea of signature as we know now- a mark in consciousness, and the consciousness to record its self awareness. Speaking to a future which is yet to arrive, and not in a way perhaps they could ever imagine.

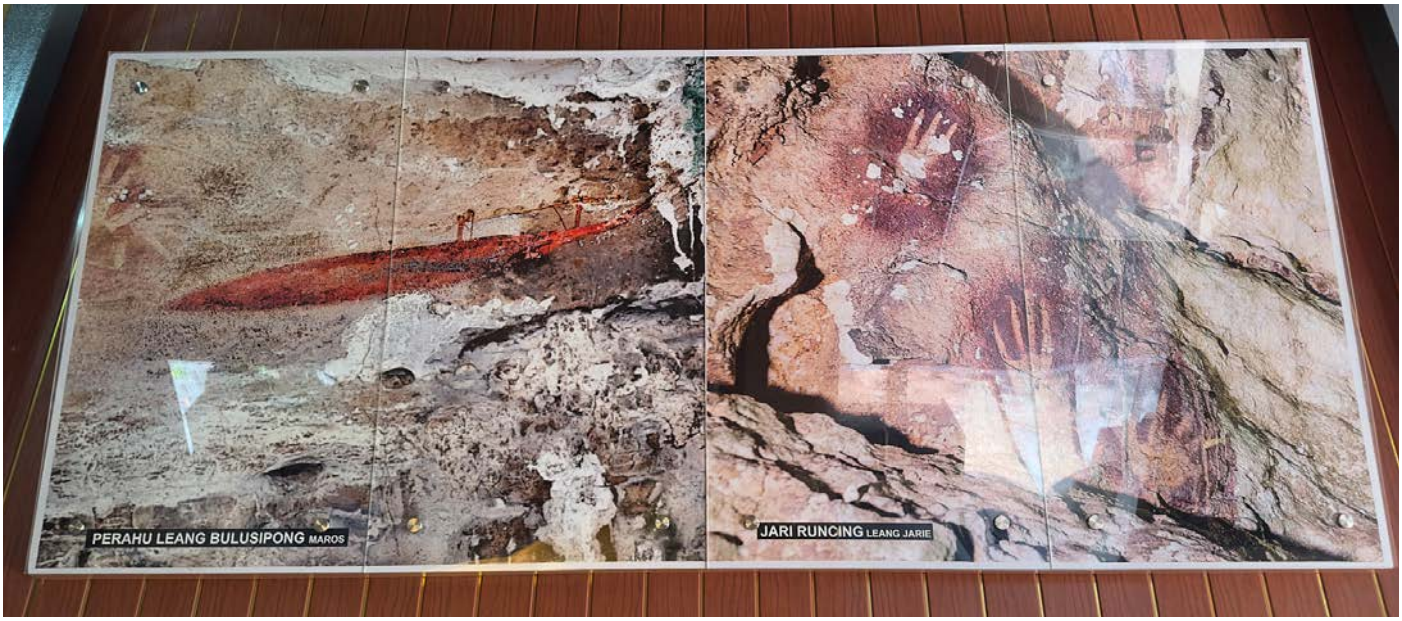


Cave 2, Leang Leang Caves, Maros Pangkep Karst, South Sulawesi

Post coming back down, we moved to a museum on site, which has various artefacts, geological information, recreations, and most importantly, a detailed documentation of the caves at Mona, the site where the oldest paintings have been found. These paintings at Mona depicted complex signs of culture—including celebrations, domestication of animals, boats which ferried people, military formations, figures fighting with sword and shields, and several other. Cristophe, Khadafi, Candu, Riyan and myself continued our discussion from the day before, about the impact of this discovery on western anthropology, how they see the 'east', and how it made many a older categories redundant. Genetic studies, migration patterns, and recreation technologies have been revealing new ways our ancestors engage with each other, taking away from the larger 'eurocentricity' and the west as the cradle of culture and civilisation. The ability to navigate the sea, came as a major fault line for many a cultures to not have interaction, and grow to different levels of advancement even if they are geographically proximate.



Museum depicting Manu Caves, Museum at Leang Leang Caves, Maros Pangkep Karst, South Sulawesi



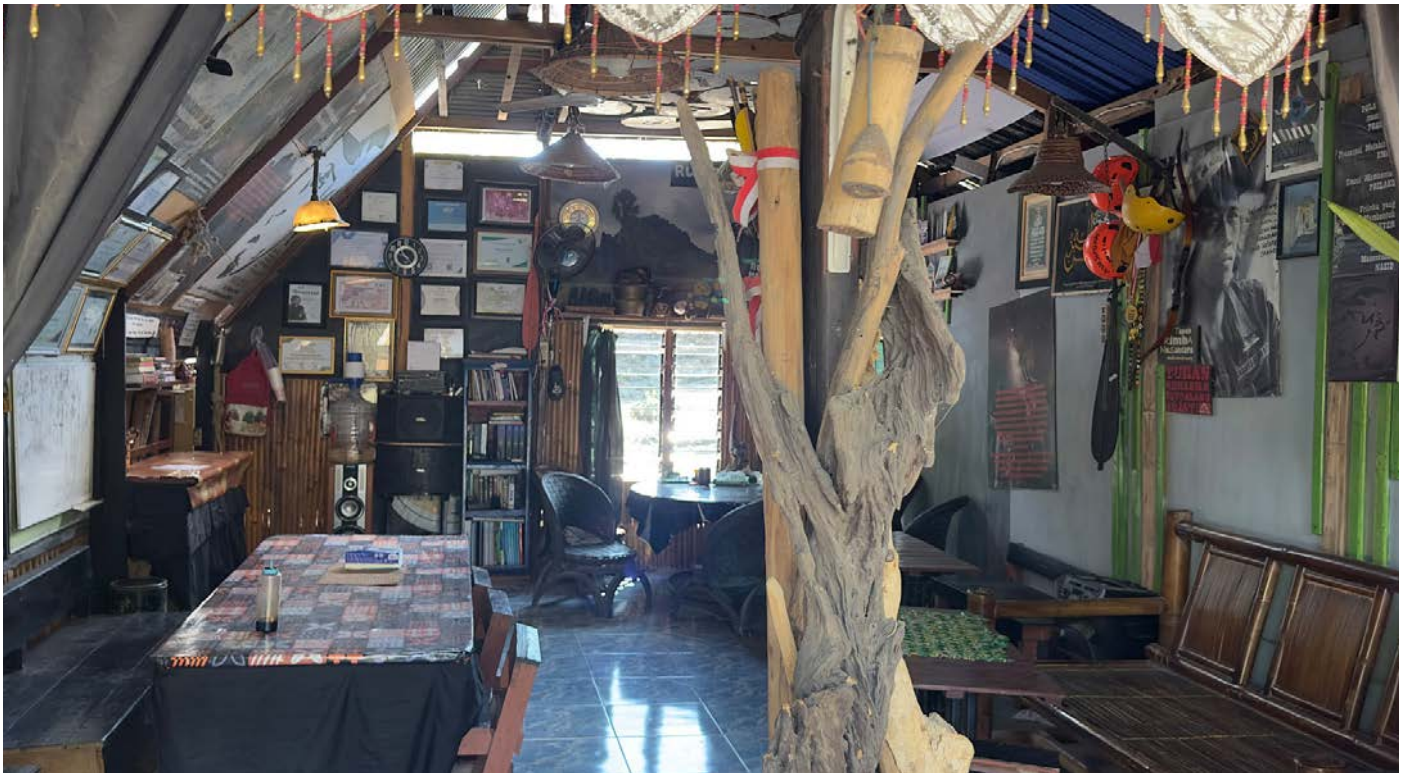
Museum depicting Manu Caves, Museum at Leang Leang Caves, Maros Pangkep Karst, South Sulawesi

Alfred Wallace Russel, described the Wallace line- a deep marine channel which runs through Indonesia, separating the islands of Bali and Lombok, and Borneo and Sulawesi. The line marks a massive drop-off into a deep ocean trench that never dried up, even during the Ice Ages. Because of this permanent water barrier, land animals could never cross. West of the Line (The Sunda Shelf), which connected to mainland Asia features megafauna like tigers, elephants, rhinos, and apes. Whereas East of the Line (Wallacea / Sahul Shelf): connected to or influenced by Australia, lack large Asian mammals, instead featuring marsupials (like tree kangaroos), unique birds (like cockatoos), and giant reptiles (like Komodo dragons).

The peoples who successfully crossed the line—the ancestors of Indigenous Australians and later the Austronesian seafarers—had to become the world's first true maritime civilization. In some ways, they were the very first colonisers. As we discussed all this, something struck me. The group we were moving with, impromptu solidarities and friendships, had an evolutionary biologist; anthropologists; ethnographers; artists; curators and researchers, all from different worlds, stakes, tied only through one thing— the mark which our ancestors, made in the shape of these drawings which have survived the test of time. A few weeks before this trip, Utpreksha, a dear friend had invited me to contribute to their pilot issue of Vanilla, an independent publication. The inquiry of the publication is around "How my art doesn't change the world". As this realisation sinked in, the stakes of mark making, in any shape or form, physically, metaphorically, might hold possibilities which are too small to be judged in the grand scale of time and history became urgent- something perhaps us young artists plagued with anxieties of capital, mobility and conceptual coherence need to desperately embody and continue nurturing.



After a long hike, on the way back we went across the Rama Rama river, to a local eatery, a home of an activist now converted into a home kitchen— who has continually worked for this area to not be given to government and private contractors of mining. It was clear, that this was a place built by the locals, both serving as a gathering and strategising centre, as well as thinking of new ways to turn the waste left by tourists on the site as materials which form the unique aesthetic of the eatery. From bottle with waste turned into flower pots, stairs, slipper walls, chairs made of discarded wood, bamboo shoots— the eatery had a unique vibe, and of course, amazing food.





Cafe near Rama Rama river, Maros Pangkep Karst, South Sulawesi









Cafe near Rama Rama river, Maros Pangkep Karst, South Sulawesi

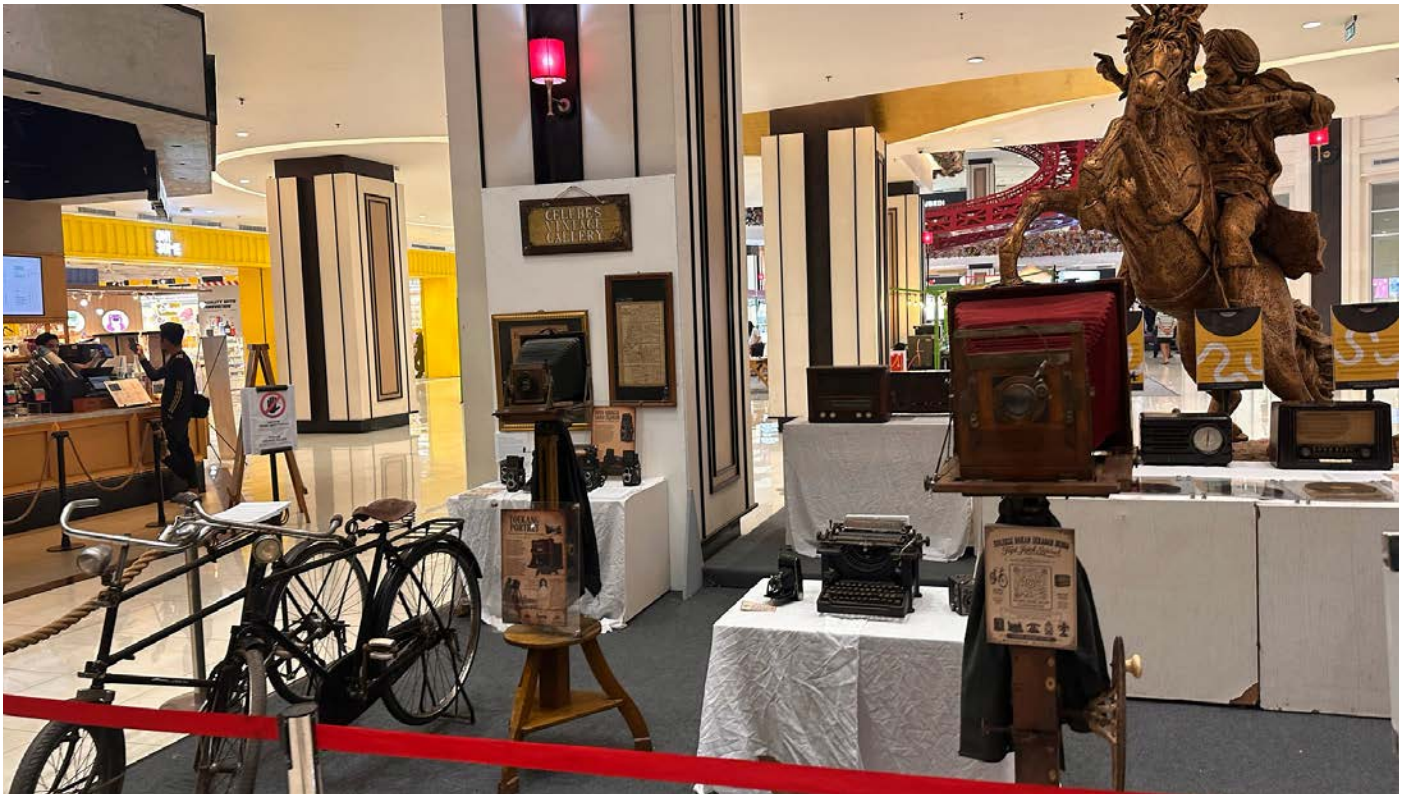
In the evening, Andan held one of his weekly workshops, which he has been facilitating since two years with members of riwanua present on site, around what forms the global south, SSWANA, MENA, and other formations, their geopolitical stakes, and how it affects practice, and practitioners at a wider scale. While Andan conducted the workshop in Bahasa Indonesia, I put my google live translate to produce somewhat of an (unsuccessful, yet usable) result, attempting to understand what was being communicated. A big part of this workshop, was to think of the question: Why is an artist from India, coming to present at an anthropology symposium with a artist led book, and why is Rahul here with us in Riwanua? Global, local, glocal , postcolonial stakes, were discussed, along with real time strategies being implemented and improvised by collectives who are more known and sought after. The session ended with spicy anchovies, chicken, and turmeric rice, flavoured to perfection, as is visible from the silence during eating in the image below.





Bi-weekly workshop at Riwanua by Andan

The next evening, we went to see Anca's exhibition, exhibited within a large shopping mall complex in central Makassar. Although we couldn't see Anca, it was incredible to witness the different possible lives of these objects, as well as the temporal, cultural and geographical frame within which the objects exist, as well as the contexts they evoke when juxtaposed with larger histories within Makassar. Its' not uncommon to have many initiatives, which have different textures (organisation, company, NGO, NPO, trust, foundation, informal collectives) associated with practitioners, which in turn mobilise themselves and other such formations within the network. When I came back to India, a couple of British artists and a Japanese artists came on a brief residency to Riwanua. Andan very carefully weaves these aligned stakeholders and practitioners and brings mobility to various initiatives; which not only creates moments of exchange, but produces cultural value and capital. Ever since Hekh was detected, it has been on my mind, to have various frameworks where we can have inter, and intra exchange; experimenting with perception, speed, shape, and scale of various mobilities. This experience here, has certainly bought and ease to think of various large entities simultaneously, and then forming intra networks within these frameworks.



Exhibition of the Celebes Vintage Gallery, Mall in Central Makassar





In the span of these five days, I also shared a couple of my own projects, apart from hekh; particularly the Whisper of an Unfired Shot, a single channel moving image, of which the first iteration I had produced in 2023 during my masters. The work resonated a lot with H-M-C, and members at Riwanua generously offered to do a screening and discussion of the work. I prepared a punjabi dhaba egg curry, for around 40 people; along with traditional coconut chicken and other dishes prepared by Andan's mother in law for the evening. The screening was 37 minutes— I had recently made a new edit of the work- much longer, diving deep into the complex intersections at which Jalianwala Bagh, punjabi culture, Udham Singh as a figure and its current appropriation as a penetrative, aggressive vengeance figure by the current regime, affecting how we rethink heritage, conservation and remembrance.



Screening of Whisper of an Unfired Shot at Riwanua







Discussion with Deli and Unu after the screening, dinner, Riwanua



Post the screening, Deli Luhukay and Nurul Muthmainnah enagged in a generous discussion, opening the different ways of how heritage, conservation, and remembrance is seen within the Indian and the Indonesian context. While in Indonesia heritage is not only the responsibility of the state, even if its a large tourist economy with several heritage agenst like UNESCO being very active parts of the discourse; it still hasn't been assigned the function of producing a unified, flattened, and singular history of the land and the people. The different visions of what it means to have decolonial drives, the way existing infrastructures interact with these ideas, and the new imaginations of citizenship itself were subjects of discussion in this evening. After an hour of discussion, we finally had a collective dinner, with pineapple wine brewed by Deli Luhukay. It is what white wine aspires to be ;)



Pineapple wine brewed by Deli Luhukay



Looking back at my time in Makassar, I don't know what I cherished most, but I know that all of it has left a deep impact on how I see art, people, relationships, and framework building. Generosity, empathy, and support of your own commune, as Kaur Chimuk often frames it, is something be nurtured. It remains unfortunate, that most pedagogical trajectories in India don't nurture the gestures of peer led formations, seeing others' practices in relationally with our own as part of a larger milieu, and how they all shape each other as an active form of artistic engagement. It is at this time, I remember Andan's visit to India, and the talk at Khoj. In the talk, he described lumbung as not only hardware, but also software; it is not something which is mutually exclusive to Indonesia, but can also be installed, and found in places which run on economies of care, of sacrifice, gifts, and generating for each other. While the lumbung, is not an end all emancipatory framework free of its shortcomings or politics, the invite which it makes possible, is a powerful gesture. It becomes even more powerful, when the impact of the invite is not laid out contractually and then followed, but felt. During my time in Makassar, and in Jakarta, I was shown incredible generosity, both as a cultural practitioner and as a friend. We shared food, coffee, thought worlds, frustrations, aspirations, vulnerabilities, songs, stories, and more. Through this visit, we hope to continue brewing more possibilities, of mobilities yet untapped, channels yet manouvered, and collaborations and solidarities waiting for an encounter.