ep7 interview - Wok The Rock

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**SPEAKERS**

Lee Tusman, Wok

**Lee Tusman**

Hello, Hello, where are you? Um, hello? Test test. Oh my gosh, hey, I'm sorry. I'm in a fancy museum and yet the Wi Fi doesn't work evidently.

**Wok**

Yeah, everything is restricted.

**Lee Tusman**

Evidently. I hope that doesn't happen again. I'm sorry. Can you say your name?

**Wok**

My name is Wok and Rock,

**Lee Tusman**

Wok, I think of you as like an artist and record label producer. Is that accurate? Or would you describe yourself differently?

**Wok**

Ah, yes, that's very accurate. Maybe I'll just say that I'm an artist who does many things like other people do?

**Lee Tusman**

You're listening to Artists and Hackers, the podcast dedicated to the communities building and using new digital tools of creation. We talk to programmers, artists, poets, musicians, bot-makers, educators students and designers. in an effort to critically look at online art making and the history of technology and the internet. We're interested in where we've been and speculative ideas on the future. This episode was supported by Purchase College. I'm your host Lee Tusman.

**Lee Tusman**

How long have you been working creating music and running Yes No Wave?

**Wok**

Since 2007, I started the label. Before I have a punk label in 1999 until 2004. And then I started the the other label Yes No Wave music in 2007. With for free download, I mean, like this idea is to share. to improve the sharing culture there because Internet has become very popular at the time. And people are sharing files. I mean, like, especially like music fans, they're sharing files, rather than, you know, buying CDs or tapes anymore. And I can see that, I don't know, in English, make the music industry... dying. But I don't see like, like that, you know, what I'm seeing like that. I just see that how people, people who listen to music, it's also important. It's the same label with the artist, or musician, and the way internet profile, this sharing, you know, file sharing, I think is still improving the culture, how we listen to the music, and, you know, we still, you know, appreciating the bands when we save the files. We actually give reward to the bands, you know, distributing to more people, and also the idea of how people can also, can also remix, it means like developed the access that music into different things, you know, different form of the music that's already recorded. So this means this is very important because it's improved the culture itself.

**Lee Tusman**

How does DIY culture play a part in your own work and history? And I guess I'm also wondering if DIY, do it yourself culture is an important element in Java or in Indonesia overall, in the art communities you've been a part of?

**Wok**

Well, I think, I think it's not only in the art, I think, you know, in Indonesia, we have like, very long time history that, you know, like the, the poor people is, is most of the population, you know, and people who don't have privilege to access, you know, technology and everything, it's most of the population itself. So, like DIY, we have it in our culture, you know, as a tradition itself. Now, the way we have to make by our own because we don't have much, you know, we don't have much access to anything our, you know, privilege to do it. Then, of course, then we learn about DIY "do it yourself" from the west, and then it becomes you know, flourishes very quickly because "ah," this is what we do. You know, for a long time, this is our tradition. Right?

**Lee Tusman**

You've been a big proponent of...you were talking about sharing culture and you know, your work is usually creative commons licensed. How did that come about? Was that something that had been on your radar for a few years? or? Yeah, I guess I'm curious how you got into that in the net audio net label tradition?

**Wok**

I didn't know anything about Creative Commons, before I upload, my first release on Internet Archive, you know, so my first introduction to Creative Commons, by Internet Archive, the Internet Archive, the archive dot ORG, you know, that's how I learned about the creative commons. And then I see, I think it's a really cool idea. It's something that I'm looking for.

**Lee Tusman**

You've been doing, you know, your work with Yes No Wave has been, you know, Creative Commons licensed. And I know you've been working with the band Senyawa. Can you say a little bit about their most recent release, and how that worked? And what you've done with them?

**Wok**

Yes, the idea of their decentralization project, you know, they're actually it comes, the idea came from, like this: So, in the past five years, I think, the last two albums of the new era was released by international labels, you know, from Europe, and from the US or the states. And the label only give them like, maybe, like 15, to 20 copies, to bring back to Indonesia. So that's that's the only copies that they can share or sell to their fans in Indonesia, because if, because, like, international mail order is not popular here, because it's too expensive, the shipping cost is too expensive for us. So and then, and then that's why and then that's become you know, like the main idea, like how we can, you know, everyone in the world can get the, the album, the physical releases, working with, you know, lots of label in different countries in different regions. So, no international shipping costs, to avoid international shipping costs. And everyone can have Senyawa albums. That's the main idea, or the main reason I think, and then also, like, I think they in the past three years, they also into you know, more, more, they call it we call it here, like working char mandiri, it means like independent, working independently, so, and they want to also like, to help their friends who practice some thing. The idea is that Wukir in the past two years, he doesn't want to, to use like, you know, what, it's not like commercial or in industry propped up of his pedal or FX. So he want to beat by his own, of course, working with his friends, something like that, also, we throughly and then it becomes like, you know, they want to sell, and help selling some, you know, goods that make by their friends. This is something like a DIY, as well, you know, like a friend who makes their own cigarette tobaccos. And then they sell it and then a friend who makes their own gas, and then they help to sell the gas. And then that's the idea. And from there, and they got the ideas and how they can with this decentralization ideas

**Lee Tusman**

Yeah, I find it interesting. I was reading, you know, the website and I've been looking at Yes No Wave. And so it sounds like they're releasing 50 different versions of the album if I get that, right, and that Yes No Wave is putting out at least two of them, you're putting out the original stems for other people to remix. And then you've also put out a remix album of their music. So and then it sounds like yeah, sorry.

**Wok**

So when they asked me, if Yes No Wave want to join as a goal remix label, and then every every labor who work with them, they have to propose what kind of format that they want to do. From the Netherlands, they want to do tapes, and from the states they want to do CD and whatever. And then when they asked me, I said, Yes No Wave is a digital label and has been known for years, about sharing, you know, then I told them that I want to release the stems. So, so everyone not only can get the music, but they can, you know, produce their own music. And they are happy with that.

**Lee Tusman**

You've always had your own website for Yes No Wave, but you've also been a curator and distributor on the Free Music Archive website. And, you know, you've used Tumblr, and I know you use bandcamp. Now, is it important to you to host your own music and art on your own sites? Or use platforms? How do you think about, like, where you present the work that you're that you're distributing the music and art, things like that?

**Wok**

Well, I see both are important, you know, self hosted or tumbler, or something like that, but in Yes No Wave all the releases, all the music files and the the artworks, it's actually stored in, in archive.org you know. It's not on my hosting because I cannot afford, I cannot afford to pay, you know, huge months of storage. And, yeah, well, I, I always make websites because it's important for me to publish what I'm doing so I think many people can can get the information. And yeah, and this is very important for me.

**Lee Tusman**

Work are you unique do you feel in terms in in Java? I mean, just in terms of so active and putting out, you know, working with this net label? Do you feel like you're part of a community of many others, also releasing music this way, in part of, you know, Creative Commons culture?

**Wok**

Well, when I started in 2007, then I think like, few months later, there are also some other labels coming up in Indonesia. And it's getting popular in 2010. I think there are lots of labels in Indonesia. And then we decided to make like an association or networks, and we call it Indonesia Net audio Forum. And then we do festival as well, like the Indonesian netlabel Festival. And then we change now to Indonesia Net Audio Festival to make it broadened formats. And we did like I think like already four times, like what we have four editions. But now I think it's most of the labels, most of the net labels are stopped and some of them move to multiple physical releases. I don't know why, maybe because of the trend. You know, like the vinyl trends, the types of revival trends, and maybe when they started the net label, maybe they think it was cool or also trendy at the time. So now I think we only have maybe like online we have three net labels at the moment. But now everything stinks. You know, like you can set up a label very easily on Bandcamp. And bands also get very well aware about bandcamp. Because in 2007, you know, bandcamp is not very popular at the time, it's just MySpace and maybe reverbnation. But now, I think it's become popular to artists many labels doing their releases on Bandcamp. But mostly are not free download. And actually I set up, I set up Bandcamp, for Yes No Wave last year, it's just because most of the artists, you know, they cannot get money from from their tour or from their gigs. So I want to help them to get some little money by selling their lossless version on Bandcamp. That's the idea. And, and it really works. I mean, like people still can download the mp3 for free. And I guess people who will download the lossless version on my Bandcamp, people who really want to support the band.

**Lee Tusman**

I'd also say, you know, the thing that stood out to me too is that you know, since you license the album's as Creative Commons and usually make it so that you know, you choose a license that allows people to remix. Sometimes for the album's I'm wondering if that's been a big part of the music scene in Java, or where you are in Jakarta? I mean, I'm thinking from my own cultural, you know, experience here in the United States, I'm thinking of, you know, remix culture originally associated with hip hop. And or, although you could also certainly say, you know, jazz, you know, when jazz musicians quote each other, I'm wondering if remix culture was a part of the Javanese music tradition? And is that something that's taken off? Or is that something that you know, you pursued because you were interested in?

**Wok**

Well, remix culture is really big in Indonesia, before I started, you know, like, you can find it on YouTube, there are a lot like people are crazy, remix, remixing music, you know, but they put it on YouTube, mostly, you know, because, like, you know, like, copyright is actually it's not really working here. It's just just recently, like, you know, artists are published showing other artists or other people. But it's still not really, I think it's not really a matter here. So yeah, remix is something that oh, super, super popular in Indonesia. You can find it on YouTube, there are lots of this Metallica mix with Dangdut or Slipknot mixed with, or Gamelon mashup, so many, so many. And, yeah. But creative commons is still surprisingly, still not popular in Indonesia. Because maybe like, you know, the copyright law is not really working here. Maybe because of that.

**Lee Tusman**

So are you saying that, in essence, people are re mixing but they don't necessarily, you know, use that kind of licensing model? Is that right? Yes.

**Wok**

And yes, and more, most of the for example, most of the small bands or independent bands when when other people save their music, or remix their music, they're very happy, you know, they're very happy. Because their music has been shared to other people and distributed to more wider public and becomes, you know, or has new forms.

**Lee Tusman**

One of the things I like about the kind of remix culture is that it's a very social, you know, culture. You know, it's a very fruitful kind of culture of people interacting and sharing you use the word sharing earlier. And one of the things I really liked when I visited Yogyakarta was how active these local art collectives were. Can you say a little bit about Mes 56 the collective that you've been a part of?

**Wok**

Yeah. Yeah, Mes 56 is actually a collective of artists who are interested in using photography and video as their medium for contemporary art. And also, like in experimental art. And we've been together since 2002. As an organization, but we've been together like, you know, like, like a community or like a collective since 1996. So it's quite, it's quite old now and we still continue. And until now, we're still self-funded. And, and there are lots of artist collectives in Indonesia, especially in Jakarta, in Yogyakarta, in Bandung as well, there are lots of others collectives maybe because we love working together in a community and we love sharing, you know, sharing our lives helping each other, because it's just part of the tradition. Like, now, because life is hard. So, yeah, so until now, there are more and more artists collectives coming up from the younger generation, and more, more surprisingly, more interdisciplinary, you know, like your collectives, you know, not only can you

**Lee Tusman**

say that one more time, you cut off just for a second, it's more ...

**Wok**

it's more, it's more multi disciplinary, you know, like, your collectives, right, you know, like, my generation, the artists collective from my generation, mostly are having one interest or one discipline, even though we do multidisciplinary arts, but we came from, like, some interest in photography, or painting or installation or theater or something like that, but now, it's more diverse people in in one collective. There are researchers, people, you know, like political activists, and then people in literature, and then movie directors. You know, it's just like your collectives. Right. Yeah, that's an interesting, and I think that there is one collective that become very, very well known in nowadays, you know, Ruang Rupa from Jakarta is become very well known at the moment, because they are the artistic director of Documenta 15. And then so many people, you know, talking about Indonesia because of Ruang Rupa.

**Lee Tusman**

I think that's it for my questions. Thank you so much Wok.

**Wok**

You're welcome. I hope my answer is good.

**Lee Tusman**

Me too. No, it was it was great.

Today's episode of Artists and Hackers was supported by Purchase College. Our guest today was Wok The Rok, founder of Yes No Wave and a director and member of collective Mes 56 in Yogyakarta, Java, Indonesia . I'm your host Lee Tusman. Our audio producer is Max Ludlow. Coordination and our web design by Caleb Stone.

You can find links to our guest as well as past episodes of the show on our website Artists and Hackers dot org.

The music from this episode comes from Yes No Wave. You can also find links to all of the music on our episode page. And you can find lots more creative commons licensed music available for free and donation for high quality audio at YesNoWave.com. This episode featured the tracks

Senyawa - Ista and Kekuasaan

Ata Ratu - Jaka Ninya Na Pambaili

Haling - Ai Kanggiki Na Umayau Biangga Duku Eri

No-Brain Dance - Milisi Miskin Kota

No-Brain Dance - Patrol Pesisir

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