



PRIMO MARELLA GALLERY
BESTRIZAL BESTA



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Bestrizal Besta (born in Padang in 1973) is an Indonesian artist working mainly with the painting. His artworks revolve around the themes of humanity, science and art. Bestrizal's photorealistic approach is grounded in photography where he constructs scenarios that are then processed as digital images that are later manipulated and embellished with elements that enable the artist to further present his moral and personal message.

His works display a mastery of charcoal as a medium, used in a remarkable scale on canvas, with a symbolic, haunting, joyful, mysterious subject matter that can lead to many discoveries.

“ [...] The charcoal works of Indonesian artist Bestrizal Besta form a series of landscapes where nature, people, and objects come into contention with one another in monochromatic black and white. These landscapes seem to invite us into a detailed world à la “Alice in Wonderland” or Hieronymus Bosch’s surreal hybrid worlds—only more scorched, as though they have just endured inferno. Besta describes various shapes, different kinds of animals and plants from macro-organisms to minuscule creatures, different kinds of objects, human body parts, and so forth. He layers elements, stacks and piles them one on top of the other, making them jostle for space on his canvas. The subjects in Besta’s works as shown at this solo exhibition mainly imply a relationship between people and nature, depicting an array of plants, animals, and sundry objects. He reveals how each artwork began from small things; and though small, they carry with them an energy that can propel others through a constellation of minute elements reminiscent of microorganisms that exist intertwined with our lived realities. [...]”. Rifky Effendy

Recent solo and group exhibitions include: 2020: Besta Bestrizal. Seeing The Unseen, Primae Noctis Art Gallery, Lugano, Switzerland; 2019: Mother Nature, Art Porters Gallery, Singapore; 2018: Indonesian Identities, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy; 2015: [Belum Ada Judul] Pam-eran + Peluncuran Buku Enin Supriyanto, Sangkring Art Space, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; 2014: Shout! MACRO – Museo d’Arte Contemporanea Roma Italy 2013: Hopes and Fears, Semarang Gallery, Semarang, Indonesia; 2012: Drawing Exhibition “It’s Complicated”, Green Artspace, Jakarta, Indonesia.

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Seeing the unseen

These days, there is a heightened conversation around global climate change. The Australian bushfires, for instance, is cited as one manifestation of the specter known as extreme climate change. Modern technology, and even the strongest political forces around the globe, could barely do anything to address these global phenomena. There's a huge disconnect between humankind and nature; it is a chasm that defies logic—as yet a mystery that scientists must work to unravel in order to minimize reckless speculations floating around regarding the risk these phenomena may have on modern civilizations. Meanwhile, it is clear that we are only moving further away from nature, even neglecting or forgetting its existence.

The charcoal works of Indonesian artist Bestrizal Besta (b. Padang, Sumatra, 1973) form a series of landscapes where nature, people, and objects come into contention with one another in monochromatic black and white. These landscapes seem to invite us into a detailed world a la “Alice in Wonderland” or Hieronymus Bosch’s surreal hybrid worlds—only more scorched, as though they have just endured inferno. Besta describes various shapes, different kinds of animals and plants from macro-organisms to minuscule creatures, different kinds of objects, human body parts, and so forth. He layers elements, stacks and piles them one on top of the other, making them jostle for space on his canvas.

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Small things may still affect modern human existence in adverse ways. Take climate change, for instance, which originated from our collective carelessness, or from our intentional trivializing of or disregard for nature, and which through an unstoppable chain reaction have led to enormous catastrophes. Or viruses that mutate into horrifying nightmares, such as the one that emerged out of Wuhan, China, only to extend its reach to the rest of the globe. They are examples of minuscule things that have the ability to turn into frightful beasts.

In *Moving in Silent* (2019), we find a human body being crushed under the weight of a butterfly-like being; in the background are roots and bushes that remind us of cells or microorganisms, or of sea creatures like corals and coral reefs, or perhaps of single-celled organisms. We also find sundry objects surrounding the body. Such is the peculiar relationship forged between people and the environment, a relationship that can morph into grotesque and tragic landscapes rather than achieve harmony or balance. Humans, in Besta’s works, are often positioned as punished bodies despite the centrality of their role: people are often seen as drowning under the deluge or vortex of objects and beings, as falling headlong and getting swallowed up by unrelenting black holes.

This sentiment is echoed in other works like *Don’t Think Small* (2019), *Think Big* (2019), *Stronger in Motion* (2019), and *Believer* (2019), where Besta has positioned creatures and objects

as dominant forces in relation to the human body. Fluorescent sea creatures, microscopic cells and organisms—spread thickly and evenly across all the artworks here—are perhaps shown to indicate their important presence to human existence and to the earth itself.

The mutilated parts of human bodies and of animals are rearranged into strange hybrids, for example in *Through it All* (2019) and *Moonlight Junction* (2019).

Besta uses color as accents to his black and charcoal spaces—see for instance: *Under the Wings* (2019) and *Nothing Worth Having Comes Easy* (2019). Colors seem to represent a different sort of breathing, a different zeal for life; they seem to convey optimism over a certain gloom, destruction, or death.

With his drawing skills and sensibilities when working with black and white, Besta succeeds in creating different and unique images of the inferno. Enin Supriyanto, who curated Besta’s 2013 solo exhibition, muses on how Besta’s thick dark charcoals enable him to present a semblance of darkness that is secretive, enigmatic, and one which occupies a tenebrous space. It is no wonder that many black and white works are filled with grim themes and stories, lurking in the dimly lit corners shrouded in an atmosphere of disquiet. Charcoal is a simple material, but if utilized correctly and deftly, it may help to open up a vast nuance. Charcoal may highlight the blinding white expanse of a drawing space but also describe dense darkness. Space opens up and allows the artist to brush and smear their charcoal.

Through this series of works, Besta presents the various issues surrounding the nature of the relationship between humankind and the environment—a relationship that stretches far beyond what is logical, a relationship that has become increasingly unfathomable. Besta looks at these phenomena from a viewpoint of a person who finds himself rather helpless in the face of present issues and of things yet to come. Beyond our lived realities are tiny things that, while unseen to the naked eye, do hold great power. Yet, implied within this message is also a hope that small things may grow into immense good. Besta’s works coax out narratives of ambiguous relationships that are forged in the interactions between modern civilization and its environment—like heaven and hell, love and war, the familiar and the as-yet-unknown, order and chaos. Every element coalesce into a constellation of diverse things that we can find in our daily realities.

Yogya—where Besta resides—continues to thrive alongside the constant threat of natural disasters, be it volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, or even tsunamis. Indonesia has flourished as a nation that lives atop the volatile Ring of Fire, where the effects of global climate change will only become more palpable and apparent as time passes. We must spiritually come to terms with and accept the bitter reality that lurks beneath our nature’s lush exterior. Living alongside nature requires us to learn about, and have a proper understanding of, the realities of life cycles and all they entail.

essay by **Rifky Effendy**

written on the occasion of the exhibition *Bestrizal Besta. Seeing The Unseen*
at Primae Noctis Art Gallery, February 2020





Depth, 2020, Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm





Everyone thinks of changing the world, 2020, Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 100 x 100 cm





Evening Banquet, 2020, Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150 cm





The Same Earth, 2021, Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150 cm





Earth's Mirror, 2021, Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 150 x 150 cm





Moving in silent, 2019, Charcoal on canvas, 200 x 150 cm







Never lost hope, 2020, Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200 cm





God will work miracles, 2020, Charcoal and acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200 cm



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