

# panji klaya

Panji Tales through the eyes of the Spanish photographer Diego Zapatero.  
A Personal Experiment in Colonial Photography

The present exhibition, which takes place within the framework of the 60th Anniversary of the Diplomatic Relations between Spain and Indonesia, celebrates traditional Indonesian culture through the eyes of the Spanish photographer Diego Zapatero. It is therefore, a symbol of the interest and appreciation that Spain and Spanish artists hold towards Indonesia.

This project is the result of Zapatero's passion for a specific type of performing arts, namely the Javanese masked dance, familiarly known as Wayang Topeng. The Spanish photographer, sensible to the visual aspects of this dance, was assisted by Patrick Vanhoebrouck, a Belgian anthropologist of Javanese culture, fascinated with the semiotic and ethnographic meanings of the performance.

The exhibition shows the contemporary narratives found during their search to meet surviving mask dance groups and mask carvers, unlocking a window on the actual state of this art performance by looking at all the people struggling to guarantee its survival in Javanese society. For this purpose photographs taken during the project are also exhibited, alongside masks and illustrations.

In the "Last Breath Of The Prince" exhibition and book project you will find images which manage to speak for themselves, courtesy of the unique approach, editing skills and the angle choices of the photographer. Yet a brief narrative offering historical, literary, spiritual and anthropological aspects of the dance captured in the photos will serve well to lift a bit of the inherent mystery and hidden meanings of this endangered performing art.



Diego Zapatero, *A scene of topeng ngamen*, 2014.

Panji tales are stories from the 13th century telling the adventures of the Prince Panji, a Javanese hero searching for his beloved Princess Candra Kirana, and his undertakings in various disguises and with a range of different names, before the lovers are reunited.

During the Majapahit empire the Panji stories became extremely popular, sea merchants spread them around and they became one of the most popular literatures in SouthEast Asia during the 17th -18th centuries. These stories are performed in various ways through dance, song and poetry.



Diego Zapatero, *Panji vs. Prabu Klono*, 2014.



When the master of a craft or the keeper of the knowledge is gone, there is nothing but material traces and vague memories left behind, crumbling away with time; there is no way to recreate their deepest intangible history and state of existence.

It is already too late for hundreds, or more likely thousands, of such cultural manifestations around the world. For the few surviving traditions, the time is now to safeguard continuous evolution and interpretation of their ancient spiritual cultural heritage.

Inscribed in the UNESCO Memory of the World in 2017, this exhibition and book project (on sale at the gallery shop) intend to do exactly that, promote and safeguard this invaluable literary and artistic treasure.

Diego Zapatero (Spain, 1982) has lived in the city of Yogyakarta since 2010, when he was sent from Spain on a two month mission to cover the eruption of the 9.600 feet tall Merapi Volcano.

In Indonesia, he was offered a scholarship for three years at the Indonesian Institute of Arts in photojournalism and documentary photography, and he focused on the visualization of human stories and Indonesian cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. In order to understand better the local culture Zapatero has mastered Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese.



Diego Zapatero, *The Last Breath Of The Prince* book, 2015.

SPAIN **INDONESIA**



Diego Zapatero, *Nipu*, 2014.

The Embassy of Spain presents:

# THE LAST BREATH OF THE PRINCE

Panji tales  
through the eyes of  
Diego Zapatero

Photography Exhibition

Diego Zapatero, *A portrait of the Prince*, 2014.

6-15 JULY 2018  
NATIONAL GALLERY  
OF INDONESIA



Diego Zapatero - Visual Anthropology  
[www.diegozapatero.com](http://www.diegozapatero.com)