

ARNDT

EKO NUGROHO
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR

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ART IS MELTING / L'ART MIXE

BY SEBASTIAN GOKALP

Eko Nugroho mixes characters in a style reminiscent of the universe of fantasy comic books, with slogans alluding to current politics. The walls are filled from floor to ceiling with his black drawings full of humour, seemingly floating inside of the space. Hybrid characters mix together human traits, animals, plants and architecture in installations filfilling up the entire space. For those to whom Indonesia signifies balinese folklore, there seem to be only two possible ways to apprehend his work: seeing Eko as an "exotic" artist, or taking an interest in his work within the context of globalised art. In truth, the best approach to his work resides most probably outside of both these clichés.

Eko Nugroho's work comes out of a local context, namely Yogyakarta, Indonesia's cultural capital, a city steeped in a tradition of independence reaching as far back as the sultanate of the Hamengku Buwono dynasty. Despite the lack of space dedicated specifically to art (excluding Cemeti Art House), Yogyakarta has a particularly vibrant artistic scene, being home to most Indonesian artists and host to a contemporary art biennale. In the past 6 years, Eko has been mingling with and been part of the international art world through participating in artist's residencies or shows abroad. In this context, Eko has been juxtaposing his local problems and javanese culture to the spaces in which his artistic interventions take place.

Eko stacks cultural layers upon each other. Indonesia itself is a layer-cake of civilisations from Borneo to Sumatra. Java has been subjected to influences ranging from such varied contexts as Hindu, Muslim and Dutch all the way to Japanese before being re-modeled by Suharto. Today, Java is largely influenced by globalised culture and the western way of life. Eko draws from Indonesian artistic traditions that are particularly vibrant in Yogyakarta such as batik, embroidery and shadow theatre.

Batik technique consists dyeing a fabric multiple times while having wax applied to certain areas in order to create a cloth with different colors and motifs. Eko's mural paintings often quote the famed geometric grampol (joined together) in their background. The repetitive and entrancing quality of these works can also be found in the sound of the gamelan, a religious incantation. This quality is crucial to what Eko is hoping to evoke. During the 4th international architecture biennale in 2009 or the Lyon Biennale, his work was clearly drawing from the context of the wayang kulit, the shadow theatre in which translucent figures are seen quoting the gestures of the Mahabharata and of the Ramayana. Embroidery, too is a very popular artisanal technique in Java. What we in France perceive as either belonging to the luxury industry or being something that grandmothers do, is in fact in Java a sign of identification, of belonging: an embroidered crest or badge on clothing can be seen on police uniforms, upper-level government officials, school children or even gangs. In Eko's work, this sign of belonging is being misappropriated or diverted in the large-scale embroideries that he develops with his drawings as a starting point.

To these traditional artistic practices he adds other modes of creation such as those that can be found in popular or counter culture: comics, murals, animated clips. His monsters and universal symbols (skulls, diamonds, guns) are juxtaposed on a repetitive batik-style background, which is linked together through the paintings, embroideries and mannequins that attempt to recreate his mental imagery. The immediacy and popular availability of comic books are what he is attracted to in this medium. His sources and inspiration range from the popular Japanese hero Megaloman and the Malaysian illustrator-artist Lat, to Crumb, Moebius and Myazaki. Graffiti, too has been part of his artistic practice since the political relaxation of 1998 (End of the New order in 1998), where he was amongst the first to cover the facades of Yogyakarta with his paintings.

This hybridisation of practices has been gaining momentum since Eko's numerous artist residencies abroad. His work mixes the Indonesian, French and English languages, creating opaque statements between a universal tongue and an unlikely alter-globalisation.

In his opinion, 90% of all Javanese creations worth being seen are reactions to a politically and economically turbulent situation. In May 1998, during an unprecedented economic crisis, the autocratic regime of Suharto that had been in place for the past 30 years was overturned by student demonstrations and violent riots (over 1000 people were killed) evoking the notion of *Amok*, this sudden surge of insanity which affected the Dutch colonists just as much as Stefan Zweig.

The generation of artists formed in opposition to this dictatorship found itself suddenly thrown. Those who had been deeply implicated – such as Agus Suwage – admit to having felt deeply confused, incapable of producing anything in the year that followed. Eko himself was only twenty at the time and part of the generation that emerged during this period of so-called *Reformation* (1998-2005). During this time, he experienced with a vast array of artistic practices in this context of a brutal and sudden liberation of speech. As is often the case during a sudden shift from an autocratic regime to a democracy, political, ethnic and religious groups find themselves in a situation of extreme rivalry with all possibility of a dialogue between them moot. Eko himself does not believe in direct activism through art in a country where half of the population lives on less than two dollars a day and education remains a privilege. His embroidered and painted texts echo daily life and the streets more so than political slogans. What he suggests through his work is to take a closer look and to be together in order to create the conditions under which real exchange can take place. To whet the appetite, he says, a spicy dish needs to be visually appealing; the fire is the second step. His work does not pose itself as a solution to conflict or problems –rather, poetic licence and absurd humour offer a possibility for dialogue and exchange while short-circuiting a locking of position.

Working in teams enables Eko to link art to socio-economic reality. In doing this, he channels the spirit of the *goton royong*, the traditional mutual aid system offered in Javanese neighbourhoods. The centralised power system in Jakarta has often ignored the provinces of this enormous country formed of a group of islands.

Being used to not rely on support from the government, the villagers have taken to mutually help each other in constructing buildings, roads and in rebuilding what was destroyed during the frequently occurring earthquakes. This particular spirit was the theme of the 10th biennale of Yogyakarta, *Jogja Jamming* in 2009. Feeling stifled during his education at the Indonesian Arts Institute (ISI), he gathered his friends – artists, musicians, illustrators, painters – in the DGTMB shop, as the Daging Tumbuh collective («collective of proliferating flfllflesh») in 2000. Avoiding the closed system of Indonesian galleries and museums, they edited a free fanzine with comic books, expressing themselves freely and distributed those without any limit on the number of copies, modelling the project on the principle of *Free Press*. In 2007, his project FFR (*Fight for Rice*), which created an economic microcircuit: young artists' creations were sold on t-shirts, bags and other souvenirs associated art and the daily struggle for survival. Today, Eko works with a community of about 24 other artists who produce sculptures, embroideries, batiks, puppet theatre, t-shirts, fanzines are in charge of their own distribution and have contributed to this exhibition, *Hybrid Testimonial*.

His artistic projects in the context of artists residencies and abroad are rooted in the same idea. Having been witness to the changes in his country, he is equally aware of our realities (daily life, strikes, elections, homelessness) when he re-enacts the *Lettres Persanes* (Persian Letters) 300 years later. The recurring figure of his work is this pair of eyes oftentimes embedded in bodies, in architecture, under clothes that watch and register what is happening. His mannequins wear costumes and masks and translate our animal nature (snake, wolf) as well as our relationship to space and territory (buildings, factory chimneys, vegetation) thus standing in as a metaphor to our need to build an identity for the others. In a country as deeply attached to conventions, appearances and clothes as France is, Eko throws us back onto our own judgmental gaze. We become the other's Other.

He uses this alterity as a key / an opener in working with communities when he is an artist in residence and immerses himself in new atmospheres and cultures. In 2009 during the Lyon Biennale, while being a resident in Vaux-en-Velin in the context of *Veduta*, he created the piece "The Rainbow under the Stone" with young residents of Vaux-en-Velin. Using questions of identity, life on the fringes of society and job insecurities as a starting point, he wrote dialogues together with them, created puppets and asked DJs and Rap artists to participate. This art *together*, open for ideas from others and rooted in daily life, is a catalyst for sociability and togetherness.

He fulfills the community that Jacques Rancière calls for in the *Emancipated Spectator* (*Le spectateur émancipé* La fabrique éditions, 2008): "In all those performances in fact, it is a matter of linking what one knows with what one does not know, of being at the same time performers who display their competences and visitors or spectators who are looking for what those competences may produce in a new context, among unknown people. Artists, just as researchers, build the stage where the manifestation and the effect of their competences become dubious as they frame the story of a new adventure in a new idiom. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It calls for spectators who are active as interpreters, who try to invent their own translation in order to appropriate the story for themselves and make their own story out of it. An emancipated community is in fact a community of storytellers and translators."

Eko evades expectations and clichés: what we see as an installation mirroring the universe of his mind is first and foremost an invitation for exchange and dialogue. Expecting to be seduced by an other art just as we were with *The Magicians*, we find ourselves confronted by our own preoccupations: the crises, otherness and the poetic strength to rethink our situation. Looking for exoticism, we find ourselves faced with our own pluri-identity. What moves him, is not contemporary art's modernist or post-modernist dynamics, but rather the necessity to create an enchanted thread inside of a fragmented world.



AWARD OF HIERARKI 2011
COLOUR INK, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



NATIONALISM 2011
COLOUR INK, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN



IF BUSINESS IS NOT GOING WELL, I WILL HIT THEM 2012
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
150 X 100 CM | 59.06 X 39.37 IN



WHEN THE SOLDIER IS CURSED BY HIS SUPERIOR 2012
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
150 X 100 CM | 59.06 X 39.37 IN



MY RELIGION IS NATIONALISM 2012
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
150 X 100 CM | 59.06 X 39.37 IN



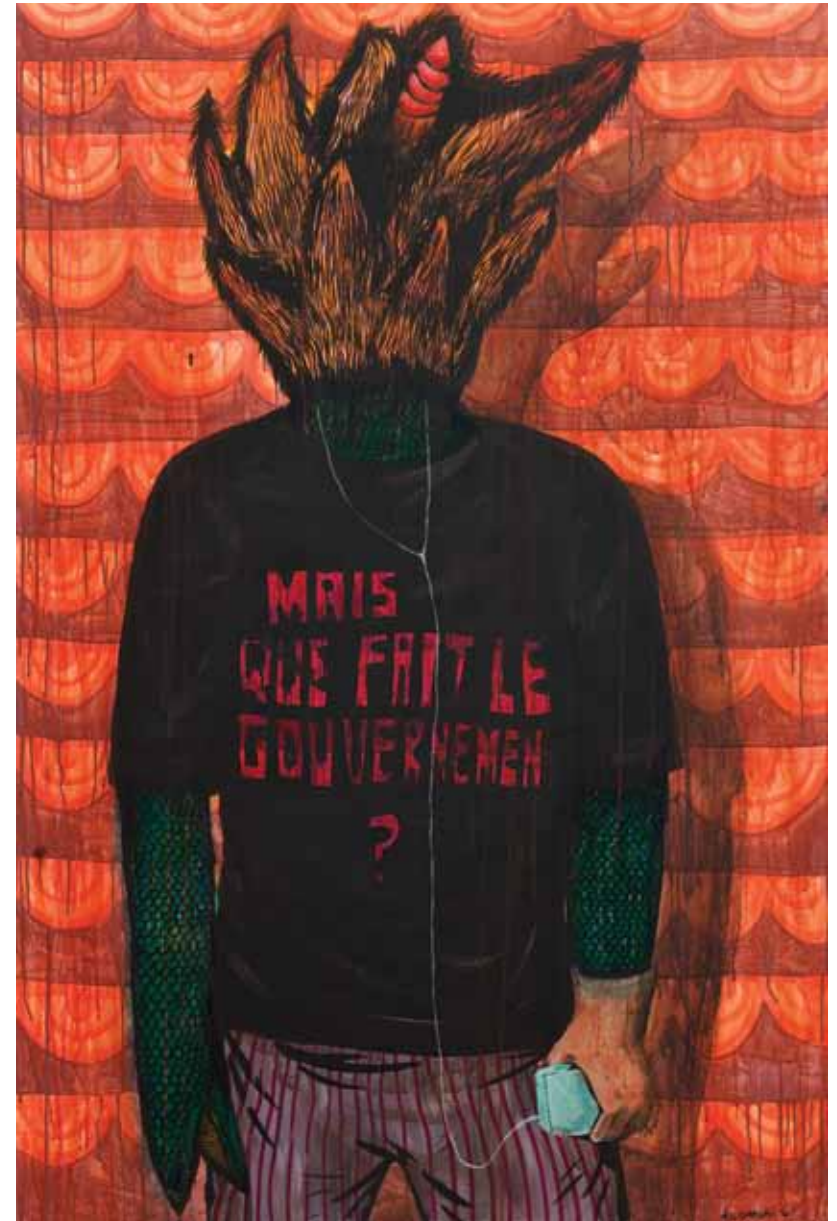
MASK SERIES #3, 2012
MACHINE EMBROIDERY RAYON THREAD ON FABRIC BACKING, WIRE
142 X 243 CM | 55.91 X 95.67 IN



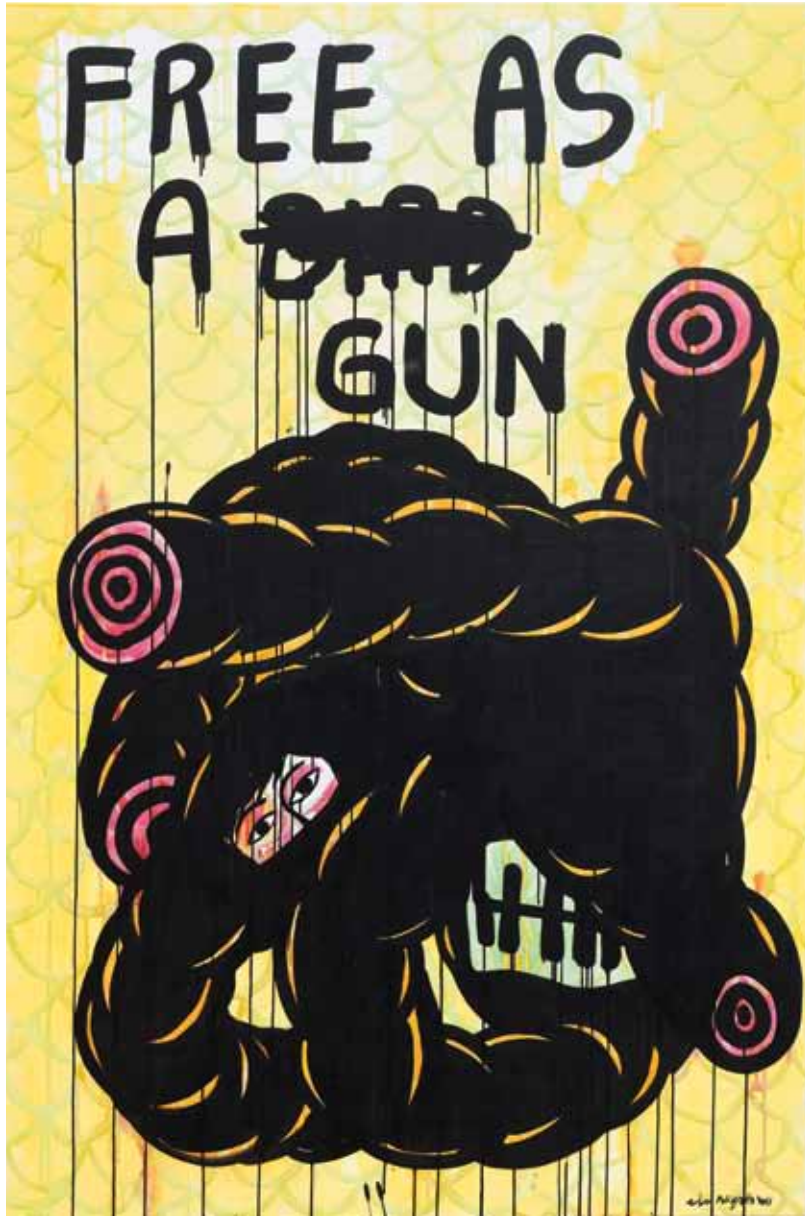
PEOPLE ARE REFLECTED SERIES (DOESN'T HAVE TO BELIEVE IN LOVE) 2011
CHINESE INK ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



PEOPLE ARE REFLECTED SERIES (SHIT! IT'S SEEM DOESN'T WORK WELL WITH THIS COALITION!) 2011
CHINESE INK ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



MAIS QUE FAIT LE GOUVERNEMENT? 2011
COLOUR INK AND ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



FREE AS A GUN 2011
COLOUR INK, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



THINKING OF FLOATING PERSONALITY 2011
KRINK MARKER, INK, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



SHE WAS BROKEN HEART ACTUALLY 2011
KRINK MARKER, INK, ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



MONEY, GOD, AND SEX 2011
BATIK, WAXES PAINTING ON CLOTH
192 X 116 CM | 75.59 X 45.67 IN



RAKUS-RAKUS RASNYA 2011
BATIK, WAXS PAINTING ON CLOTH
192 X 116 CM | 75.59 X 45.67 IN



MASK SERIES #1 2012
MACHINE EMBROIDERY RAYON THREAD ON FABRIC BACKING,
WIRE IMAGE EMBROIDERY: 225 X 140 CM TEXT PANEL: 116 X 150 CM



MEMBELI 98
BENCI, UNTUK
MEMBUTAKAN
TOLERANSI
SEBIJI!

MASK SERIES #2 2012
MACHINE EMBROIDERY RAYON THREAD ON FABRIC BACKING,
WIRE IMAGE EMBROIDERY: 237 X 149 CM TEXT PANEL: 116 X 150 CM



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN



EXHIBITION VIEW: 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
THREAT AS A FLAVOUR, ARNDT BERLIN





DECEIT AS A POLICY 2011
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



NEW PERSON WITH SAME OLD PROBLEM 2011
COLOUR INK AND ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
195 X 130 CM | 76.77 X 51.18 IN



EXHIBITION VIEW : 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
TÉMOIN HYBRIDE, MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS, PARIS, FRANCE



EXHIBITION VIEW : 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
TÉMOIN HYBRIDE, MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS, PARIS, FRANCE



TRAP COSTUM FOR PRESIDENT 2 2011
EMBROIDERED RAYON THREAD ON FABRIC BACKING
190 X 146 CM | 74.8 X 57.48 IN



TRAP COSTUM FOR PRESIDENT 1 2011
EMBROIDERED RAYON THREAD ON FABRIC BACKING
180 X 156 CM | 70.87 X 61.42 IN



EXHIBITION VIEW : 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
TÉMOIN HYBRIDE, MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS, PARIS, FRANCE



EXHIBITION VIEW : 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
TÉMOIN HYBRIDE, MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS, PARIS, FRANCE



PAS DE TRAVAIL 2011
FROM THE SERIES: HEUREUSEMENT, IL N'Y EN A PAS
INK ON PAPER | 47 X 36 CM



PAS DE LIBERTÉ 2011
FROM THE SERIES: HEUREUSEMENT, IL N'Y EN A PAS
INK ON PAPER | 47 X 36 CM



PAS DE ÉGALITÉ 2011
FROM THE SERIES: HEUREUSEMENT, IL N'Y EN A PAS
INK ON PAPER | 47 X 36 CM



PAS DE FRATERNITÉ 2011
FROM THE SERIES: HEUREUSEMENT, IL N'Y EN A PAS
INK ON PAPER | 47 X 36 CM



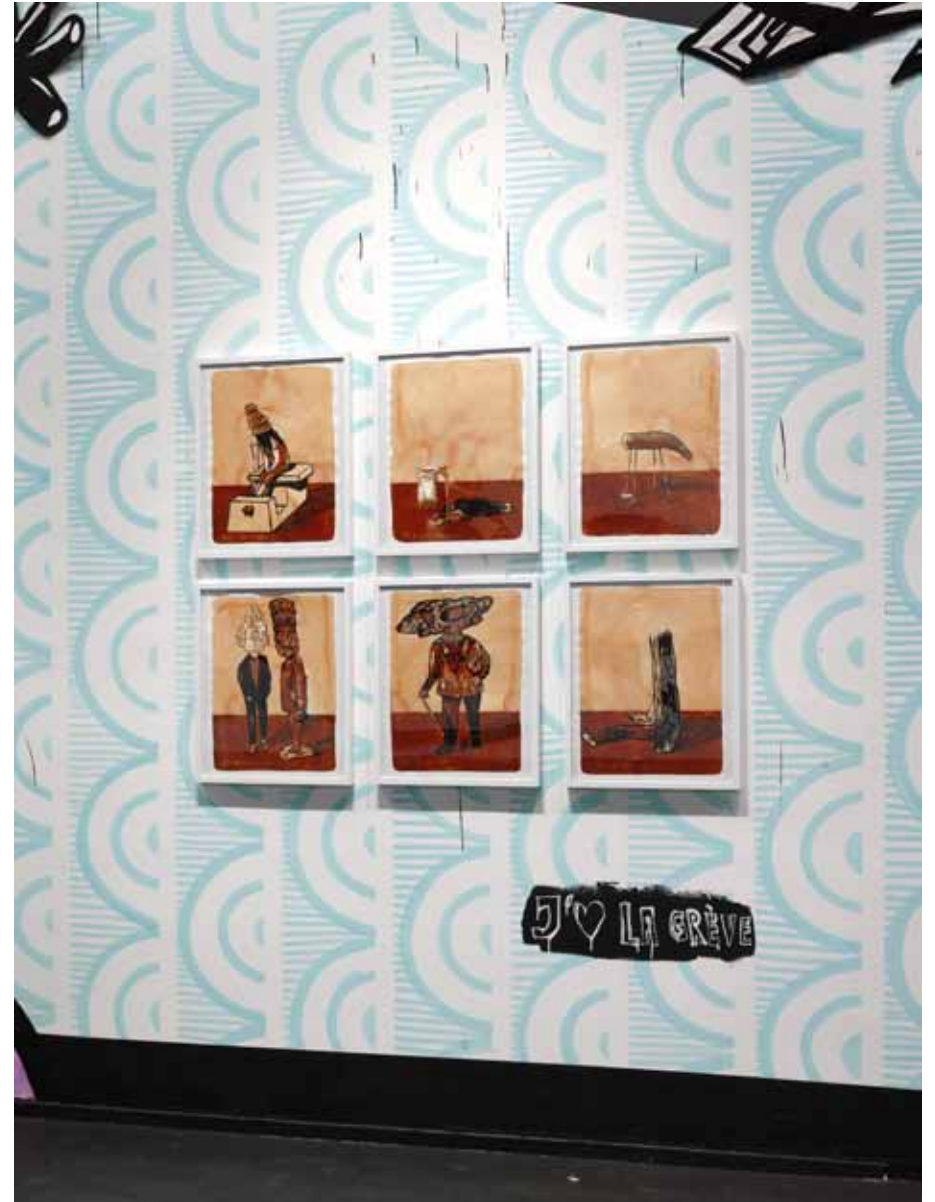
PAS DE RESPECT 2011
FROM THE SERIES: HEUREUSEMENT, IL N'Y EN A PAS
INK ON PAPER | 47 X 36 CM



PAS DE SOLIDARITÉ 2011
FROM THE SERIES: HEUREUSEMENT, IL N'Y EN A PAS
INK ON PAPER | 47 X 36 CM



EXHIBITION VIEW : 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
TÉMOIN HYBRIDE, MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS, PARIS, FRANCE



EXHIBITION VIEW : 2012 EKO NUGROHO:
TÉMOIN HYBRIDE, MUSÉE D'ART MODERNE DE LA VILLE DE PARIS, PARIS, FRANCE

EKO NUGROHO

Born 1977, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Lives and works in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 Témoin Hybride, MAM Paris
- 2011 The Eko Chamber: Recent Works by Eko Nugroho, Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA)
Snobs Behind Ketchup, Lombard-Freid Projects, New York
The Republic Needs More Semeleh, ARK Galerie, Jakarta
- 2009 Solo Exhibition of Eko Nugroho, Galerie Nouvelles Images, The Hague
Under the Shadow, Pekin Fine Art, Beijing
In the Name of Pating Tlecek, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta
Hidden Violence, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta
- 2008 Multicrisis is Delicious, Galeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia
The Pleasures of Chaos, ARK Galerie, Jakarta
- 2007 In Wonderland, Valentine Willie Fine Art Project Room, Kuala Lumpur
- 2006 Merdeka Atoe Sms, Toimoi, Jakarta
- 2005 Sorry I Am Late to Celebrate, Artnivora Gallery, Jakarta
Eko Nugroho, Artoteek, The Hague
- 2004 Welcome Back Mayonnaise, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta
- 2003 Fight Me, Via-Via Café, Yogyakarta
- 2002 Bercerobong (Like a Chimney), Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 Fantasy Island, Louis Vuitton Island Maison Singapore;
Espace Louis Vuitton Hong Kong (2011)
- 2011 Beyond the East, Macro, Rome
Asia: Looking South, ARNDT Berlin, Berlin
Beyond the Self: Contemporary Portraiture from Asia, National Portrait Gallery, Canberra
Transfiguration - Indonesian Mythologies, Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris
Close the Gap: Indonesia Art Today, Melbourne International Fine Art, Melbourne
Isles of a City Named Jogja, Primo Marella Art Gallery, Milan
Decompression # 10: Ruangrupa Anniversary, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta
- 2010 Beacons of the Archipelago: Contemporary Art from South East Asia, Arario Gallery, Cheonan, Korea
Ni 50 Jar, Part 1, Galerie Nouvelles Images, The Hague
Contemporaneity: Contemporary Art in Indonesia, Museum of Contemporary Art Shanghai, Shanghai
Heat Wave, Lombard-Freid Projects, New York
The Comical Brothers, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta
Lihat! Video Art from Indonesia, Galeria Jesús Gallardo, Leon, Mexico
- 2009 Biennale Jogja X: Jogja Jamming, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta
International Festival for Arts and Media – Cream, Yokohama
X Biennale DE LYON: The Spectacle of The Everyday, Lyon
Beyond the Dutch, Centraal Museum Utrecht, Utrecht, The Netherlands
Tales from Wounded Land, Tyler Rollins Fine Art, New York
Dorodoro, Doron –The Uncanny World in Folk and Contemporary Art in Asia, Hiroshima Museum of Contemporary Art, Hiroshima
Fluid Zones, Jakarta Biennale 2009, Grand Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS - CONTINUED

- 2008 Mask/Gemaskerd, Heden, The Hague
Expenditure: 2008 Busan Biennale, Busan, South Korea
Dari Penjara Ke Pigura, Salihara Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Manifesto, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
Something from Nothing, Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans,
New Orleans
- 2007 Geopolitical of Animation, The Andalusian Centre of Contemporary Art, Seville
Militia: OK Video Festival, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta
100 Tahun Affandi (100 Years of Affandi), National Archives Building, Jakarta
Masa Lalu Masa Lupa (The Past the Forgotten Times): Six Indonesian Artist
Interpret Indonesian History, Traveling Exhibition: Artoteek ,The Hague,
Netherlands; Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta;
Erasmus Huis, Jakarta; Yaitu Gallery, Semarang; Biz Art, Shanghai, M1- Fringe
Festival, National Museum of Singapore
Wind From the East: Perspectives on Contemporary Asian Art, Kiasma Museum
of Contemporary Art, Helsinki
- 2006 5th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art,
Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Taipei Biennial 2006: Dirty Yoga, Taipei Fine Arts Museum, Taipei
- 2005 Sub / Version: OK Video Festival, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta
Shadow and Spaces: Contemporary Art from South East Asia,
Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin
Three Young Contemporaries, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
Bali Art Biennial: Space and Scape, Denpasar
- 2004 Move on Asia: Animation and Single Channel Video Art Festival,
Remo Gallery, Osaka
Reformasi: Contemporary Indonesian Artists In the Post-Suharto Era, Sculpture
Square, Singapore
Have We Met?, The Japan Foundation Forum, Tokyo
Equatorial Heat, Sichuan Art Museum, Chengdu

- 2003 Countrybution: Yogyakarta Biennial VII, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta
Ok Video, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta
Exploring Vacuum, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta

SELECTED RESIDENCIES

- 2012 Singapore Tyler Print Institute
- 2011 ZKM | Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany
SAM Art Projects, Villa Raffet, Paris
- 2009 Veduta-Biennale de Lyon, France
- 2008 Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans, New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
National Museum of Singapore
- 2007 Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki
- 2006 Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane
Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taipei
- 2005 Artoteek, The Hague
Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin
- 2004 Amsterdam Graphics Atelier (AGA), Amsterdam

SELECTED COMMISSIONED & SPECIAL PROJECTS

- 2012 Untitled
Mural project with Le M.U.R Association at 107 Rue Oberkampf, Paris
Life Is A Trick and Tricky Is Cool
Mural commission for Leroy Merlin's store at Ivry-sur-seine, Paris
- 2010 The Strategies of Ya Ampunn!
Mural to cover the façade of Taman Budaya Yogyakarta (Yogyakarta Cultural
Center) for Indonesian Art Now: The Strategies of Being, Art Jogja 2010

SELECTED COMMISSIONED & SPECIAL PROJECTS - CONTINUED

- 2009 Open City Jakarta
12 contemporary wayang characters for the exhibition design of Open City Jakarta at the 4th International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (IABR), commissioned by Dr. Stephen Cairns and Daliana Suryawinata, curators of Open City Jakarta
- 2008 It's All About Coalition
A pair of bronze sculptures and mural at the Glass Atrium, commissioned for the National Museum of Singapore
- 2006 It's All About Destiny! Isn't It! & What Do You Want?
A mural for the foyer of the Gallery of Modern Art (GoMA) and for the Children's Art Center in conjunction with APT5, commissioned by Queensland Art Gallery

SELECTED ARTIST BOOKS

Mooi Weer

The Hague: Artoteek & Cemeti Art House 2005

The Tram, Amsterdam: Amsterdam Grafische Atelier 2004.

The project was made possible by Prince Claus Foundation, Cemeti Art House, HIVOS Amsterdam Fonds voor de Kunst

COLLECTIONS

Tropen Museum, Amsterdam, Netherland
Asia Society Museum, New York, USA
Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Australia
OHD Museum of Modern & Contemporary Indonesian Art, Magelang, Indonesia
Akili Museum of Art, Jakarta, Indonesia

COLLECTIONS - CONTINUED

ARK Gallerie, Jakarta, Indonesia
Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt, Germany
Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
Arario Collection, Cheonan, Korea
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia
Artnow, International A3 Collection, San Fransisco, USA
Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris
Musée des Beaux-arts de Lyon
Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, Australia (MAGNT)
SAM Art Projects Collection, Paris, France
The Guy & Myriam Ullens Foundation
Esa Sampoerna Art Museum, Surabaya, Indonesia

CREDITS

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