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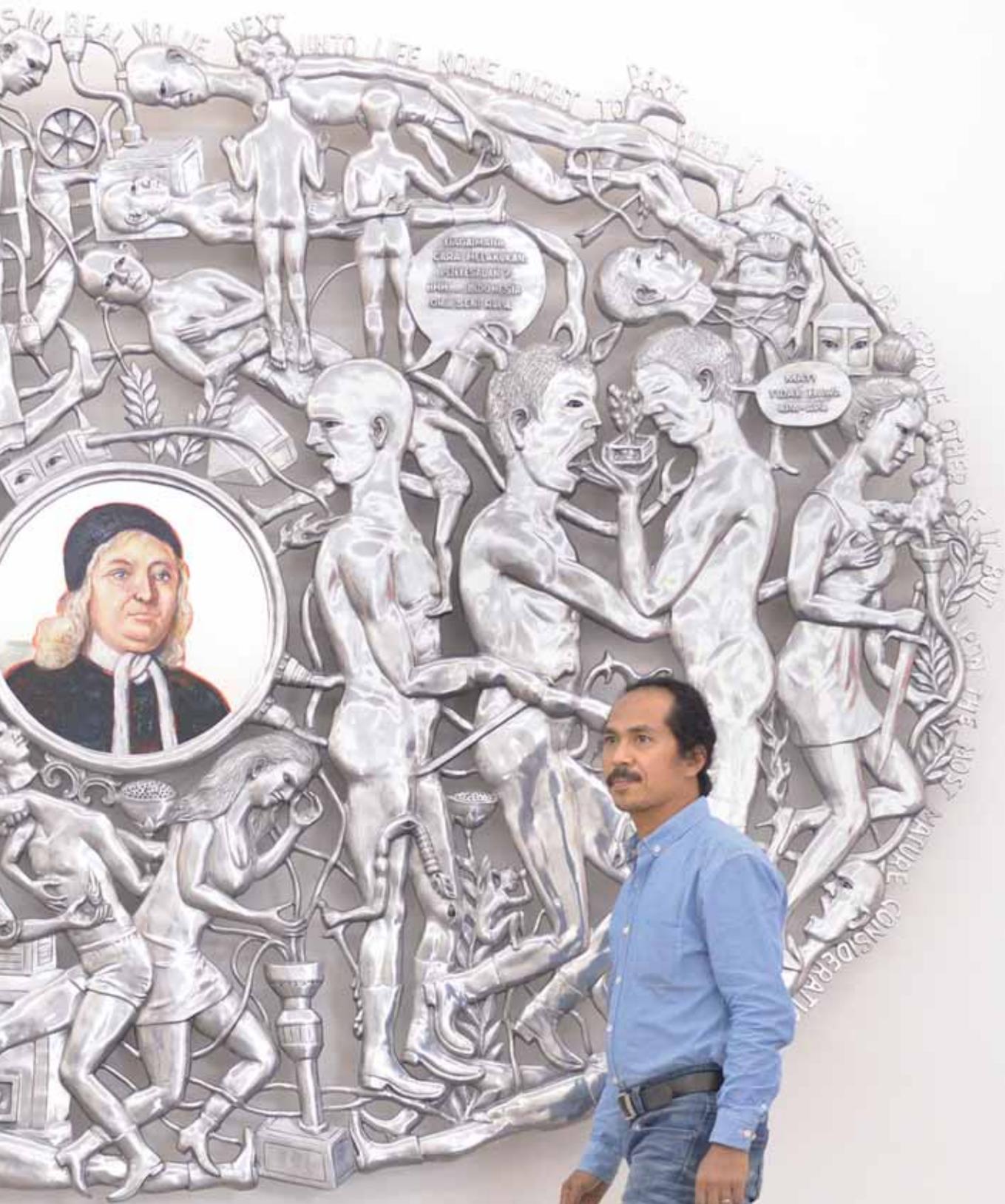
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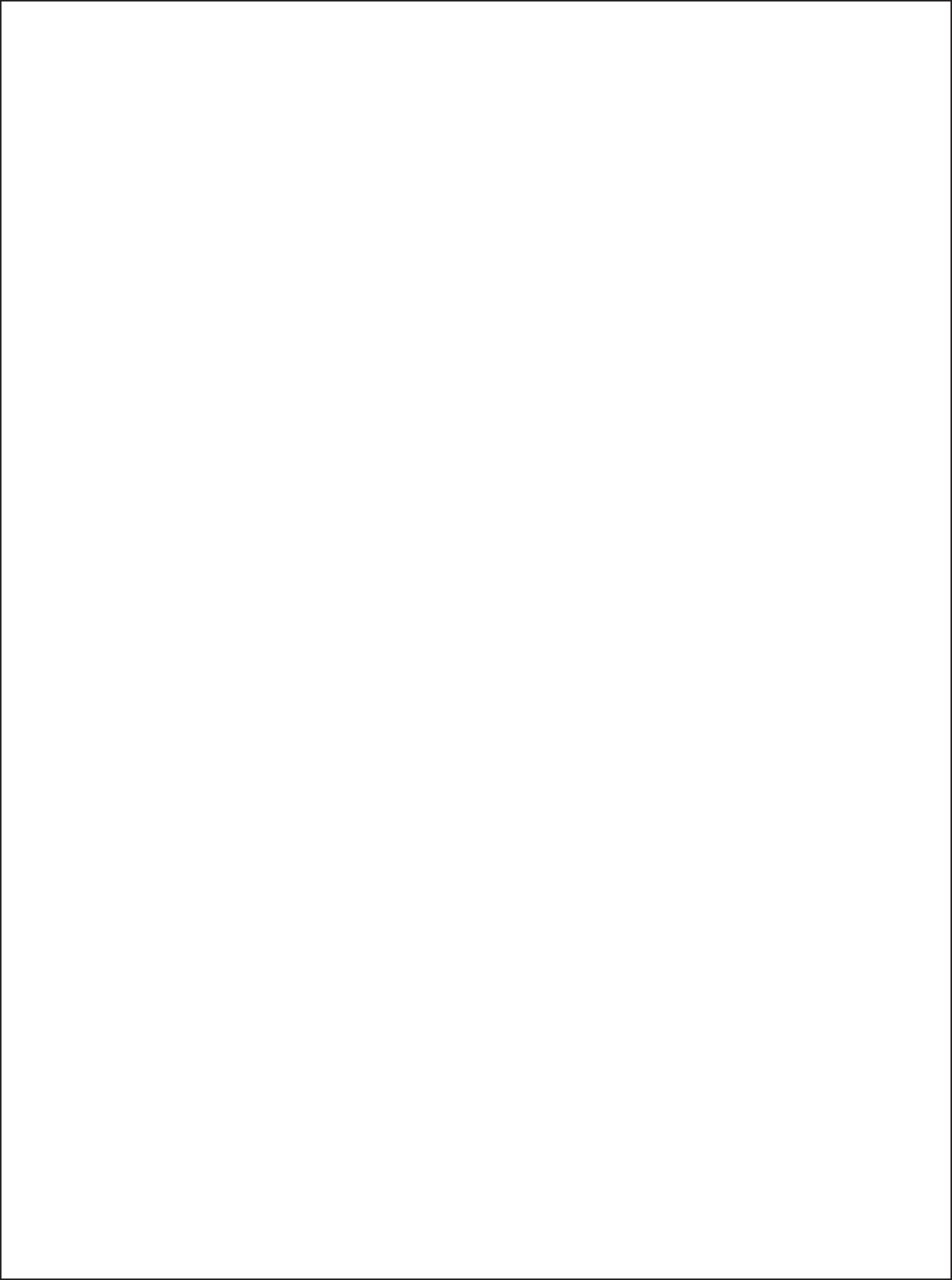
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ENTANG WIHARSO
TRILOGY



ENTANG WIHARSO Trilogy

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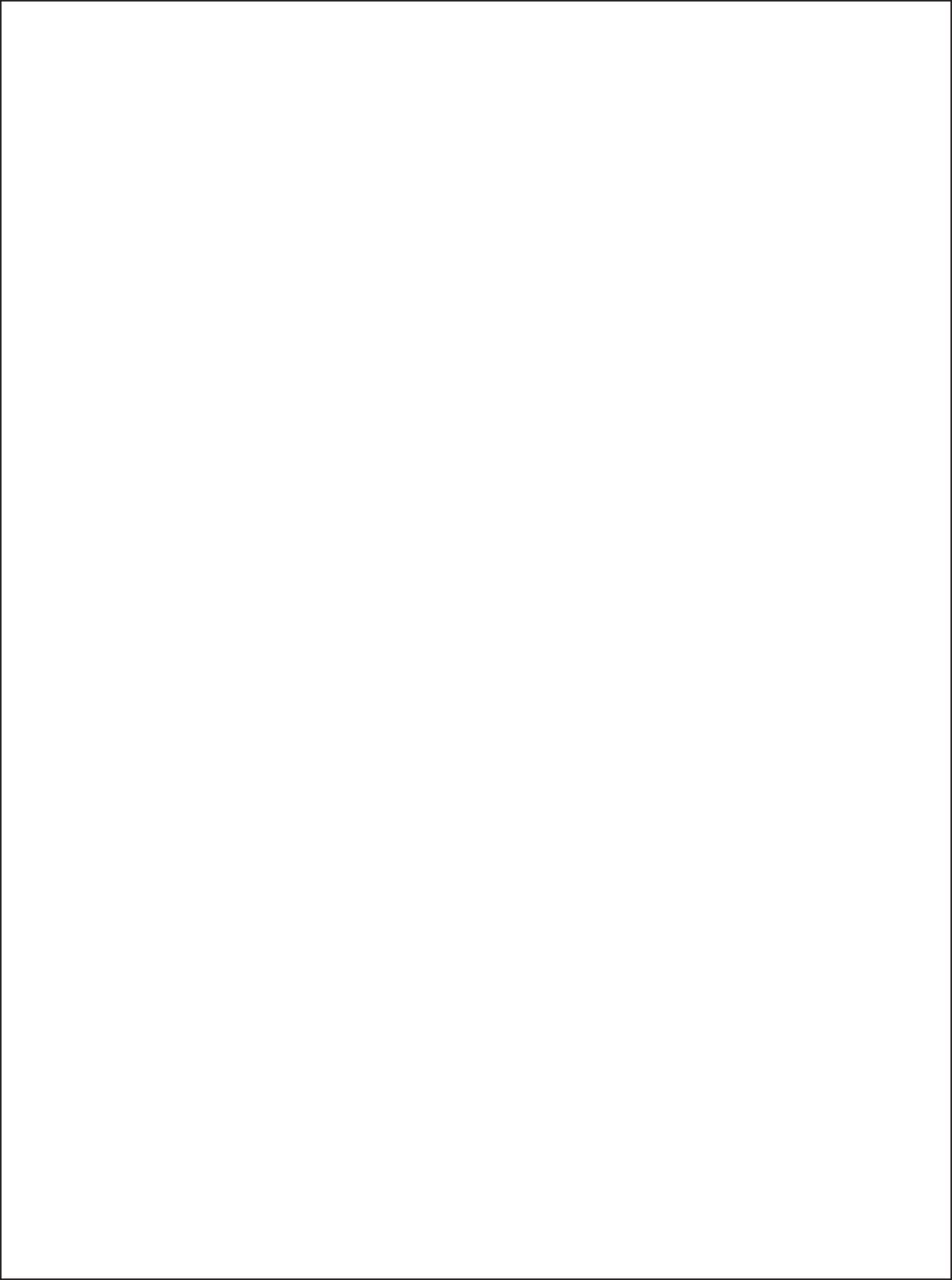
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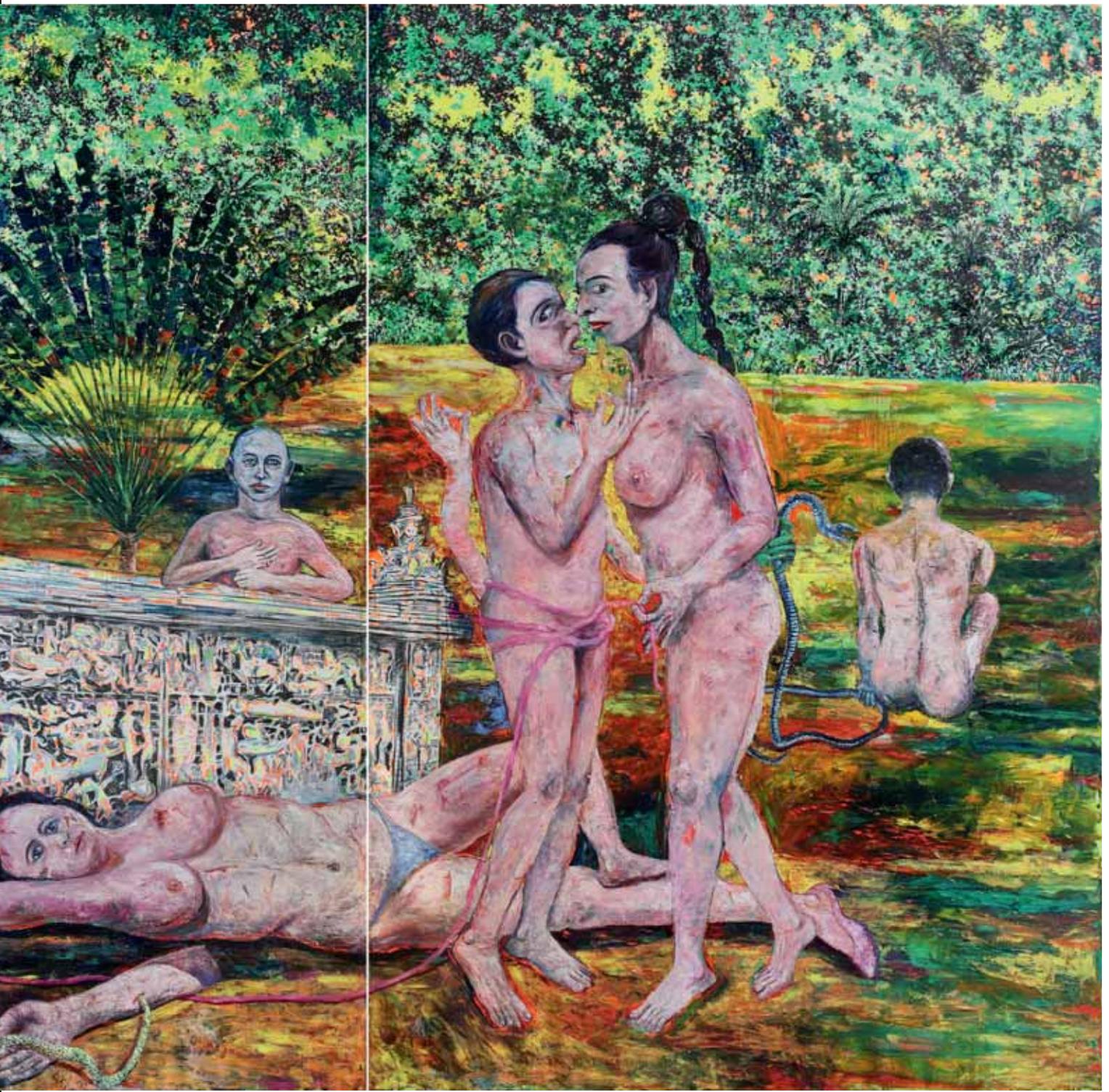
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Entang Wiharso
March 2014



Above: *Reclaim Paradise*, 2013, acrylic, charcoal, oil on canvas, 300 x 600 cm (triptych)

Following spread: *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide*, 2012-2013, graphite, resin, thread, color pigment, steel, flame light bulbs, electrical cable, 1500 x 550 x 500 cm (Exhibition view Indonesian Pavilion, Arsenale, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2013)











Opposite: *Golden Sweat*, 2014, brass, graphite, resin, color pigment, thread, 170 x 100 x 140 cm
Above: *Golden Sweat* (detail), 2014, brass, graphite, resin, color pigment, thread, 170 x 100 x 140 cm
Following spread: *Memorial Landscape #2*, 2012-2013, graphite, resin, brass, color pigment, thread, colonial-style tiles, 600 x 140 cm









Contents

Acknowledgements	9
Preface Christine E. Cocca	22
Trilogy Entang Wiharso	30
Kambing Hitam: an Interview with Entang Wiharso Natalie King	42
Staging Narratives of Changing Identity Alia Swastika	64
LOVE ME OR DIE	96
The Vibrating Harrow: Love and Loathing in Entang Wiharso's Recent Work (Part II) Amanda Katherine Rath	104
Signs in Entang Wiharso's Work Suwarno Wisetrotomo	142
Zuhud: Protecting the heart, surrendering the self to ecstasy Jim Supangkat	160
The Vibrating Harrow: Love and Loathing in Entang Wiharso's Recent Work (Part I) Amanda Katherine Rath	168
Between Artistry and Imagined Subjectivity Syamsul Barry	174
UNTOLD STORIES	180
Entang Wiharso's <i>Untold Stories</i> Amanda Katherine Rath	182
GEO-PORTRAIT	218
The Indonesian Diaspora Nicola Trezzi	222
Entrails Nirwan Dewanto	236
Crush Me Amanda Katherine Rath	262
The Duality of Love Helena Spanjaard	274
Notes on the Geo Portrait Exhibition by Entang Wiharso Rifky Effendy	278
The Character and the Setting Asikin Hasan	280
Biography and Exhibition History	300
Contributors	306
Credits and Permission	310

Entang Wiharso is an internationally acknowledged artist, particularly known for his large scale paintings, wall sculptures and installations. Born 1967 in Tegal, Central Java, Indonesia, he studied painting at the Department of Fine Art, Indonesian Institute of the Arts, Yogyakarta, Indonesia and now divides his time between studios in the United States and Indonesia.

Entang Wiharso's work from the last decade can be divided into three periods, which correlate with bodies of work exhibited in various solo exhibitions: *Love Me or Die* from 2005-2010; *Untold Stories* from 2010-2012; and *Geo-Portrait* from 2012-2013. The work from the *Love Me or Die* period explores social, cultural and political systems that lead to 'chronic conditions' that suppress individual desires and dreams. The *Untold Stories* period focuses on the artist's own family stories, exploring the veracity of historical truth and the development of a national historical narrative. The *Geo-Portrait* period continues this investigation, moving toward monumental works that 'trace personal and collective experience...', exploring how the history of ideas, land, migration, and ecology are contained within our actions today.'

This book, entitled *Trilogy*, was conceived as a way to reexamine the events, experiences and work from this time. *Trilogy* offers an in-depth study and overview of the artist's creative practice through essays and documentation of the exhibitions, research and writing about his work from these periods as well as images of his painting, sculpture, installations, performances, video work, sketches and preparatory drawings. Two introductory texts by noted researchers on Southeast Asian art are published here for the first time. Australian Natalie King, a curator and Senior Research Fellow at the Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, discusses Entang's most recent work in an interview that

explores critical events and conditions in the artist's life. Indonesian curator and writer Alia Swastika describes Entang's environment and studio practice while taking a look back at the way motifs and work methods have emerged during the artist's career. Throughout these introductory texts, iconic and rarely seen artworks are reproduced, many images for the first time. Subsequent sections, each focused on a specific period from the last decade, highlight previously published essays and excerpts from key writers on Entang's work, along with behind-the-scenes documentation and views of related solo exhibitions. Throughout we see Entang Wiharso's thoughts and creative process unfold, bringing us back to his new body of work and his future trajectory.

Entang Wiharso's six solo exhibitions from this period form a set of correlated inquiries, presenting different iterations of related themes. As Amanda Rath has noted, "One of Entang's many strengths is his ability to create ...connections within and interdependent tangents between individual art works. Structurally, this is best expressed in Entang's solo exhibitions, in which he constructs unity by strategically deploying repetition and singularity....To see the relationship between each piece, between painting and installation, and these to the whole is, then, crucial in order to grasp the prismatic depth of Entang's ideas." While Entang's art is clearly thematic, each work offers an unsparing, potent statement with the ability to effect viewers' feelings and perception. It is the form of his work, as much as his subject matter, that proves remarkably interesting.

Love Me or Die

Previous exhibitions including *NusaAmuk* (2001) and *Inter-Eruptions* (2005) were precursors to this body of work and mark a shift toward increasingly autobiographical, narrative material. The work from this five-year period presents questions about the nature of

Preface

power and identity. Entang looks at the ways in which strong emotions like love and hate can become instruments of obsession and fanaticism, suggesting analogies with objects such as tools that transform into weapons of violence and aggression. He proposes that identity is a permeable 'skin' and that the pressure exerted by external systems suppresses individuality and tolerance.

Entang desires public engagement. In the catalogue for *Love Me or Die* Wiharso states his intentions, acknowledging the interpretive and interactive nature of his practice:

All the works exhibited...explore inter-related ideas. I don't prescribe to a singular formation or interpretation of my artwork. The works are often linked through concepts and symbolic language to create 'webs of meaning' and therefore can be arranged in various ways to express viewpoints, challenge assumptions or create provocative correlations. Here I have chosen to group the works within 'sets of ideas' to stimulate questions and analysis....My intention is to stimulate people to bring their individual experiences into play when viewing and interacting with the work.

His choice of material and an increasingly eye-catching aesthetic are used to draw the audience in and impel contact. The beautiful aspects of his work, glossy surfaces, saturated hues and the delicate line of his landscapes, invite us into environments that are disturbing, distorted and chaotic. In his artist statement in the catalogue for *Love Me or Die*, Entang initiates us into the exhibition with a provocative riddle-dilemma:

Ally with me
Choose me
Embrace me

or Die

Why must we follow rules that do not make sense?

Why must we be uniform?

Why can't we love what we adore?

What is going on in this world?

As in the subsequent *Untold Stories* and *Geo-Portrait* series, Entang positions himself as participant, narrator and instigator. The articulation of themes is a way of defining the parameters of his inquiry.

Untold Stories and Geo-Portrait

Initiated by a traumatic event and inspired in part by the publication of a book of anecdotes about former Indonesian president Suharto, *Untold Stories* aligns the artist's personal experience with historic events, tracing their impact on contemporary beliefs and perception. In this period, Entang uses personal objects like clothes, shoes, daggers and plants from his garden as archival material embedded in the work. *Untold Stories* features images of a man and woman (the artist and his wife) against fertile, verdant landscapes that simultaneously suggest natural or man-made disasters. Entang described how the ideas for *Untold Stories* came about:

I thought a lot about what led to a disturbing event in my home—a robbery and its aftermath—and about how attitudes, beliefs and assumptions can stem from previous, even distant, events. I was interested in tracing what might be the root causes that led to a certain way of thinking, in traveling back along the timeline to consider aspects of Indonesian history, like migration, trade, and captivity, and subsequent survival strategies that continue to exist in response to historical events. As I dug into these issues and considered my own feelings and experiences, other stories were uncovered, other realities.

It is this focus on the personal which characterizes this body of work. There is a human scale to the paintings and sculpture that imbue them with a particular ethos, a suggestion of domesticity and internal concerns. During this period, Entang was selected to represent Indonesia, along with four other artists, at the 55th Venice Biennale. The work he presented at the Indonesian Pavilion was a large-scale installation entitled *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide* (2012-2013). This pivotal work is the conceptual link that connects *Untold Stories* with *Geo-Portrait*. Personal narrative merges with the encompassing, epic narrative of the nation demonstrating that individual identity can never be isolated from national character. "You can never get away from the fact that you are an individual with a national identity," Entang explains. "This installation is a call to face history, to take ownership for the past, and recognize that not only have we done good as a nation and as individuals, but we have also made terrible mistakes. Now is the time to look at the past with clear eyes and from many perspectives."

The external focus of *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide* characterizes the *Geo-Portrait* body of work. This series is monumental in conception, scale and composition. The artist takes up an examination of the individual's role in larger events, exploring how reality, and by extension truth, is neither fixed nor easily documented. The installation *Crush Me*, (2012) a massive, double-sided wall that recalls the architecture of Javanese compounds was the name chosen for an exhibition of work from *Geo-Portrait* in Shanghai. Afterwards, Entang continued exhibiting work from this theme in two smaller exhibitions, *Geo-Portrait* in Lugano and *Geo-Portrait #2* in Jakarta. Each show pairs works containing images of fences, temples, family portraits, floating islands, tropical paradises and interconnected couples. Each piece tells the story of human agency; of our capacity for confrontation, pain, passion, faith, compromise, leadership, subterfuge,

private suffering and joy. Collectively *Geo-Portrait* assures us that the individual is the engine of history, that our actions matter. Entang Wiharso's work asserts that our beliefs and choices today are an extension of what came before, and that we all have the capacity to shape the future.

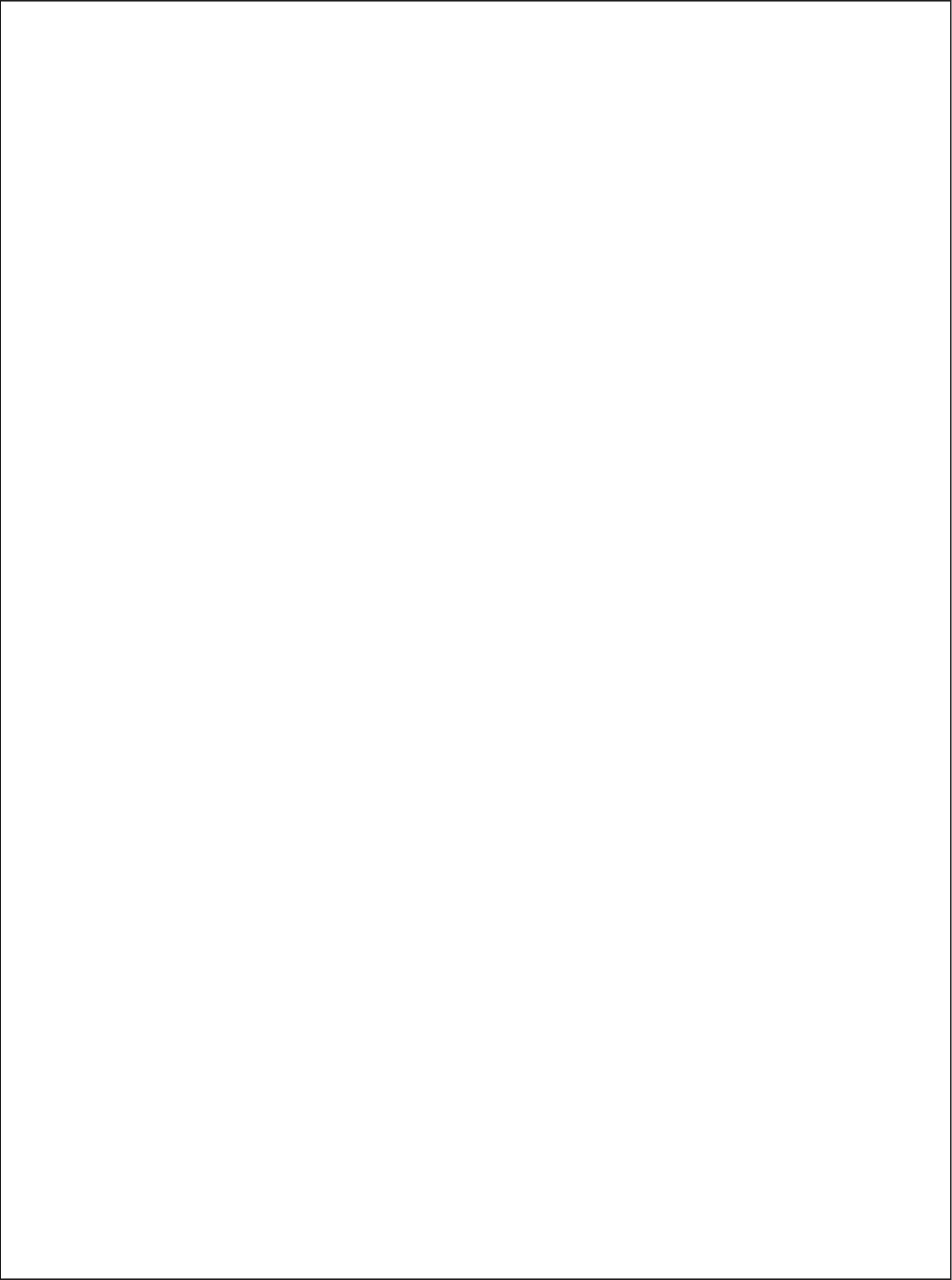
Trilogy

The exhibitions of these three bodies of work over the last decade have generated many questions about Entang Wiharso's artwork and process. The connection felt to the images and ideas in his work, coupled with an acute sense of unease, fosters an urgency to know more and to understand the underlying issues at play.

Trilogy, then, is an attempt to respond to this curiosity and provide the public with a framework for assessing his creative practice. It is our hope that this book will significantly contribute to scholarship on Entang Wiharso's work. The presentation of key images and rarely seen artworks from the artist's oeuvre as well as documentation of his studio practice and exhibition preparation, alongside new essays and previously published writings, provide the opportunity for a deeper understanding of his methodologies.

Entang Wiharso remains compelled by the issues he explored in the works from the last decade. His ability to look at events through his own experience, interspersing the sober reporting of ordinary events with the suddenly intruding vision of a dream, offers us an understanding of the complex conditions of our own lives.

Christine E. Cocca
Director, Antena Projects









Previous spread and above: *My Cake is Sweeter than My Neighbor's Cake*, 2011, performance at APT Gallery, Indonesian Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Indonesia



TRILOGY

In 2003 I made the painting *Trilogy: World, Hell and Heaven* and ten years later in 2013 I responded to this work with a new painting *Trilogy: Birth, Life and Death*. These two pieces are pillars that separate and support my work from the last decade. Along with the trio of exhibitions (*Love Me or Die*, *Untold Stories* and *Geo-Portrait*) presented here, these works inspired the title for this book.

The ability to use words to describe visual language is limited, so explanations of my work will always be inadequate. Each piece has many layers of meaning and it is impossible to describe and explain it all. Instead, I build up a history of ideas and have developed specific symbolic forms within my art to provide clarity. The iconographies I use such as knives, walls, tables, internal organs, superheroes and the Black Goat already have connotations for many viewers. It is this sense of familiarity that I want to engage/convey. Familiarity nurtures fluency and therefore the symbols function as an entry point to my work. Below, I highlight some points explored in *Trilogy*:

Transition and Crisis

Since 1997 I have lived in the United States and Indonesia. There have been many things that happened in the course of my life, traveling from place to place. Sometimes I feel life is about endless transition. I have witnessed, as we all have, incidents like the fall of Suharto's rule in Indonesia, the collapse of the World Trade Center in New York, the Bali bombing, the global economic crisis, the rise of fanaticism, and the impact of global warming and natural disasters. Social uprisings, forced governmental collapses and increasing inequalities within several spheres of society put us collectively in crisis. How can I overcome all this? Art plays an important role in my life. Through it I respond to past events, stay connected with the world that surrounds me and am also able to make statements about global events and what is going on inside of me. My art is evidence of the reality around me.

Tradition and Chaos

Tradition and chaos are important aspects in my creative practice and come from a desire to create deeply felt works about my culture and life. I have often questioned the need and the impetus for the customs and conventions we uphold today. Investigating the roots of these traditions is an important conceptual focal point for me. The norms and values we uphold in contemporary society are often followed without thought because they are imbedded in traditions that we value. In my work, the purpose and use of tradition changes depending on the situation. My art does not function to conserve tradition; rather it is used as a source to talk about art and society. Java is a place where tradition, modernity, innovation and ancient practices exist side-by-side. This can be disorienting and seem chaotic. However, when I see this chaos, at the same time I see structure. This is precisely the condition in Indonesia. If you are used to other systems, it can be hard to see the underlying structure in my country or in my art. Being from Indonesia, I am familiar with this condition, which I see extending throughout the world, though for different reasons. I believe the situation globally now is analogous to the weather conditions. We never know what to expect; the weather can be extreme and hard to predict. This increasing sense of uncertainty affects our mind-set over time, and this phenomenon remains a concern in my work.

Identity and Power

There is a tendency to search for an Indonesian 'style' or 'sensitivity' in my work. This perspective and attempt to categorize my output undercuts my ideas and becomes

a denial of my work, exoticizing my concepts and intentions. My 'Indonesian-ness' is already embedded within me, and I don't attempt to express this in an overt way in my work. The issues of identity and power were the focus of my exhibition *Love Me or Die*. The work evolved into statements and stories about my experiences in specific arenas of life, such as religion, family relations, the art world and politics. My interest was to illuminate the conditions that foster connections to a particular ideology, culture, religion or identity and our mind-set as we defend and adhere to these constructs. I created an immense display of work utilizing the exterior of the Indonesian National Gallery, its foyer and exhibitions spaces to create a series of conceptual barriers/entryways. In the exhibition catalogue I divided the work into five interrelated sets of ideas: Identity and Hybridity; Vehicles for Memory; Art and Power; Social Norms; and Tolerance and Resistance.

Taboos and Norms

Two years later I read *Pak Harto: The Untold Stories* (Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2011). This book is supposed to show the 'other side' of the story of former Indonesian President Suharto. At this time, I was making work that used my physical and mental archives. I was uncovering and tracing my memories and this process intersected with national and global narratives. The series that resulted, *Untold Stories*, contains images that may be considered taboo in Indonesia, showing nudity and sexual content. But these perceptions are relative and contested. Norms that exist in society today are followed habitually, yet often stem from rules established for reasons and by people that have little connection to our current reality. There are more than a few norms that are defective but remain chronically a part of society. *Untold Stories* shows the two sides of a story, the one that has been told and the one that has not.

Personal and National Narratives

In my work from *Geo-Portrait* I deal with issues of perceptions and reality. As I investigated and thought about people's motivations and backgrounds, I discovered other stories that revealed another reality different than the national narrative of Indonesia's development. These were anecdotes about individual experiences of migration, land and ecology, survival and injustice that were connected to a larger geo-political narrative. I used my own personal as well as public records and memories extensively during this time to re-activate these archives and create new narration and meaning. The idea that our perception of events is often formed by incomplete information and that propaganda, generalizations and prejudice play an important role in historical narrative is at the core of this work.

Barriers

Subconsciously we construct barriers and the barriers are becoming thicker. We have created mental and physical systems that end up separating and 'protecting' us from each other, despite assurances they will bring us closer or make us better neighbors. The cyber world is infinite while also creating barriers more concrete than any we have known before. We often watch people talking in front of us from a distance of one hundred meters or a thousand miles. We are connected, but are we closer? Do we know each other better? Can we see beyond the fence? The only distance that remains separating continents, islands and villages is a mental border. In my work since 2001, I've been using images of fences and walls to examine the issue of barriers. In the first project entitled *Wall of Nation*, I asked 1000 people to describe 'reformasi,' the process of reform that ensued after Suharto's downfall. This work looks at the disconnect between expectations and reality. I travel a lot and this has made me aware of the problem of

always changing location. The collisions that exist between various perceptions and opinions are more evident when entering the conditions in another place. Living between the United States and Indonesia, and being forever 'in between,' means I feel the barriers designed by economic and political powers, by ideologies and beliefs, more keenly.

Reflection

I often think about the statements and questions of scholars and the public who interact with my work. Where does the imagery originate? What is the function of tradition in the work? Why is it so chaotic? How to begin to understand?

To understand art you must feel it and confront it. When you see art and feel you don't understand it and don't know how to understand it, that means you are entering a new reality beyond your expectations. When you feel that something is foreign, you build barriers and experience curiosity, depending on how much you want to open your mind.

Can we escape from the place and borders?

Can we get out of the system and the structure of power and norms?

Are we always in touch with the past, or the now?

We have a tendency to forget or to remember everything/something/nothing.

Remembering and forgetting are both a kind of learning.

I want to make observations, to explore with experiments, questioning and investigating through art to make new ways of thinking, to create another (new) reality, hopes and dreams.

When you break boundaries—cultural, national, racial, ethnic and territorial—then you have real freedom.

The contents of this book represent a broad survey of my studio practice from the past decade. The material comes from a wide range of sources including information and images from my personal archive. I want the many exhibitions and public presentations included here to offer one source of documentation to help answer the questions that have been asked of me.



Untold Story: Floating Island, 2012, oil and acrylic on linen, 300 x 600 cm (triptych)





Expanded Dreams, 2011, graphite, resin, pigment, thread, batik fabric, gold leaf, light bulbs, cables, dimensions variable





Close Proximity, 2013, acrylic and oil on canvas, 144 x 178 cm







Kambing Hitam: an interview with Entang Wiharso

Previous spread: *Thin Line Border: The Story Behind Black Goat*, 2010,
graphite, resin, color pigment, teak wood, stainless steel, 140 x 65 x 500 cm

On 15 February 2014, Mount Kelud on the island of Java erupted causing mass evacuation and disruption. While preparing for his solo exhibition at ARNDT Singapore, Entang Wiharso's studio in Kalasan, Yogyakarta, was covered in a shower of volcanic ash. In the midst of this chaos, the following interview took place via an email exchange between Entang in Yogyakarta and Natalie King in Melbourne. The vagaries of disaster are the backdrop to Entang's new exhibition *Trilogy* as they candidly discuss mobility, storytelling and history. Entang flexes his dexterous approach to creating open-ended scenarios that invoke complex relationships between people, the personal and the political. Drawing on folkloric traditions, his wondrous and fantastical depictions are at once satirical yet deeply moving critiques of the human condition.

Natalie King (NK): How did you become an artist? Was there an epiphany moment?

Entang Wiharso (EW): In 1992, I was traveling on a bus from Jakarta to Yogyakarta while thinking about my career in the arts and suddenly I felt I had come to an understanding of color and line. I had a picture in my head and a strong desire to make it. I arrived in Yogya on a Sunday when the stores were closed. I didn't have the particular colors I was thinking about; I didn't have black and white. I really wanted to work on this picture that resided in my head, so I asked my colleague to borrow some black and white roof paint, which was all he had in his studio. That night I made a work on paper. I could see and understand how the color and lines worked together, it was really clear. I eventually made two paintings that night, *Hug* and *Twins*. This was the breakthrough moment when I felt I had become an artist and was in control of my practice.

NK: Can you elaborate on the role of stories, anecdotes and narrative in your work?

EW: Living and growing up in Indonesia, storytelling was one important element in daily life. I think this is one way for the public to create a layered reality—a picture

of life that can be metaphorical and symbolic—in order to move beyond their actual and routine reality. Since narration and storytelling are fictions, they allow us to escape or avoid the normal sanctions that are imposed by cultural and social norms of appropriate behavior, although this kind of activity can also carry risk. Oral traditions in Indonesia are more developed than written storytelling. This is most evident in *wayang kulit* puppetry, particularly the role of the *dalang*, or puppet master, who is not merely a performer or entertainer. The *dalang* communicates and disperses critical ideas to protest or evaluate events in society or the nation. The *dalang* has two functions: to control the audience during the performance and to create a different version of reality, using storytelling to reveal motivations, background, character, those aspects that motivate the action.

My use of narration stems from this cultural practice in Indonesia—the use of anecdotes to change reality or create a new interpretation or understanding of a common reality. The narrative elements in my work are more personal in nature and are not linear. I create open-ended scenarios, using personification. I don't express good and bad, right and wrong, but try to establish a position in between, because I don't want to be trapped into a moral position based on norms. I want to free it all up

Since narration and storytelling are fictions, they allow us to escape or avoid the normal sanctions that are imposed by cultural and social norms of appropriate behavior....

while focusing on the language of visual art itself. I also use repetition as a way to undertake a deeper investigation of the themes I'm focusing on. Sometimes I also create a stage, a theatrical format, in my installation, three-dimensional work and performance to induce audience participations.

I have created stories based on my personal life meaning history, memory, dreams, conflict and social and political realities. For Indonesians, talking about reality is also simultaneously talking about myths because the real and the unreal (the mystical) are intertwined.

NK: Figures features prominently in your work in contorted and convoluted configurations. Can you discuss the role of figure and gesture especially the repeated depiction of your wife Christine?

EW: There is a lot of possibility in art to make a new reality using all kinds of images and symbols and by creating a specific visual language. Contortion and distortion in my work is the way I convert language into imagery; it is not aesthetically motivated. It is more conceptual, a way to present specific ideas about perception. When looking at the distorted figures the viewer is confronted with a different reality. By changing the physical reality, I create figures that are in a confrontational or crisis condition in order to force people to see the effect of perception. My intention in distorting the figure is to make viewers look more closely at the details of what is happening and to ask the question "why is that?" I often use images of my wife to bring in autobiographical aspects to the work. Because of our connection, our relationship, she is a part of my self-portrait. My understanding of myself stems from our closeness.

NK: You work adeptly across media from painting to copper sculptures in relief, performance and large

installations. How do you segue from one medium to another?

EW: In the beginning it was a kind of refusal of and resistance to aspects of the art educational system in Indonesia, which encouraged students to choose one medium, a mindset of specialization that was blind and made me fear the effects of stagnation. Maybe it was a way to strive for freedom of expression and the freedom to create a new way. I don't like to be restrained in any way, and I wanted to have a creative freedom that was difficult to get outside my studio practice at that time. I was interested in how to create experiments without limits and how we could find new possibilities. This would have been impossible to achieve if I had limited my choice of medium and so this experimentation and movement across media became a part of my studio practice and became critical in the development of ideas.

I have always felt in transition, it is the way my life is. Of course, this is my choice and though it is sometimes hard, it also gives me more possibilities and more possible structures. The movement between and across mediums feels very natural. Certain ideas just fit with a particular medium and I feel it is just another language to use.

NK: You are based between Indonesia and the US with studios in Yogyakarta and Rhode Island. How does living between two cultures affect your practice? You have written about your early memory of being in transit with your parents moving from rural Tegal to opening a food stall in Jakarta. Is mobility embedded in your work?

EW: My movement between two countries and cultures has pushed my brain to work in new ways and has influenced my emotions. The drive to compare the two and the experience of different realities has given me a valuable distance from the normal studio practice in

When looking at the distorted figures the viewer is confronted with a different reality...a confrontational or crisis condition that forces people to see the effect of perception. My intention in distorting the figure is to make viewers look more closely at the details of what is happening and to ask the question “why is that?”

Indonesia. Since Sudjojono’s time, studio practice in Indonesia has been dominated by the investigation and documentation of social problems and social norms. I wanted to distance myself from this paradigm. I felt it was too calculated or clichéd, more a recording of events that didn’t support an exploration of other areas. Despite the distance and movement that has allowed me to escape certain restraints, sometimes I can’t release myself from the memories of my experiences. I have the tendency to forget things, but in fact the memories are so strong in my subconscious and emerge in my work. Maybe this is a kind of resistance to my mobility, a denial.

For example, I have been using tables in my work for over a decade and it has only been in recent years that I became aware that this is influenced by my experience working in my parent’s *warung*, which was a small food stall in Jakarta. The table was the only resting place, and was also a stage, a point of meeting with customers where all kinds of issues were discussed and revealed. That was the place where critical dialogue occurred every day about equality, hierarchy, politics and religion. Despite a deep connection to Indonesia, I do feel restless. When I work, I always want to keep moving and questioning. What is satisfying and dissatisfying, good work and bad work, successful and unsuccessful?

NK: Can you discuss the role of the outsider or ‘black goat’ as another gesture of being in between cultures, in a liminal state or in opposition to the establishment?

EW: The concept behind ‘black goat’ comes from an Indonesian term, *kambing hitam*, which in English means both scapegoat and black sheep. My black goat identity developed in response to a dominant paradigm in the Indonesian art world about what constituted contemporary art and what were legitimate ways of practicing art and engaging with the art world. There were attempts to control and sanction artistic practice.

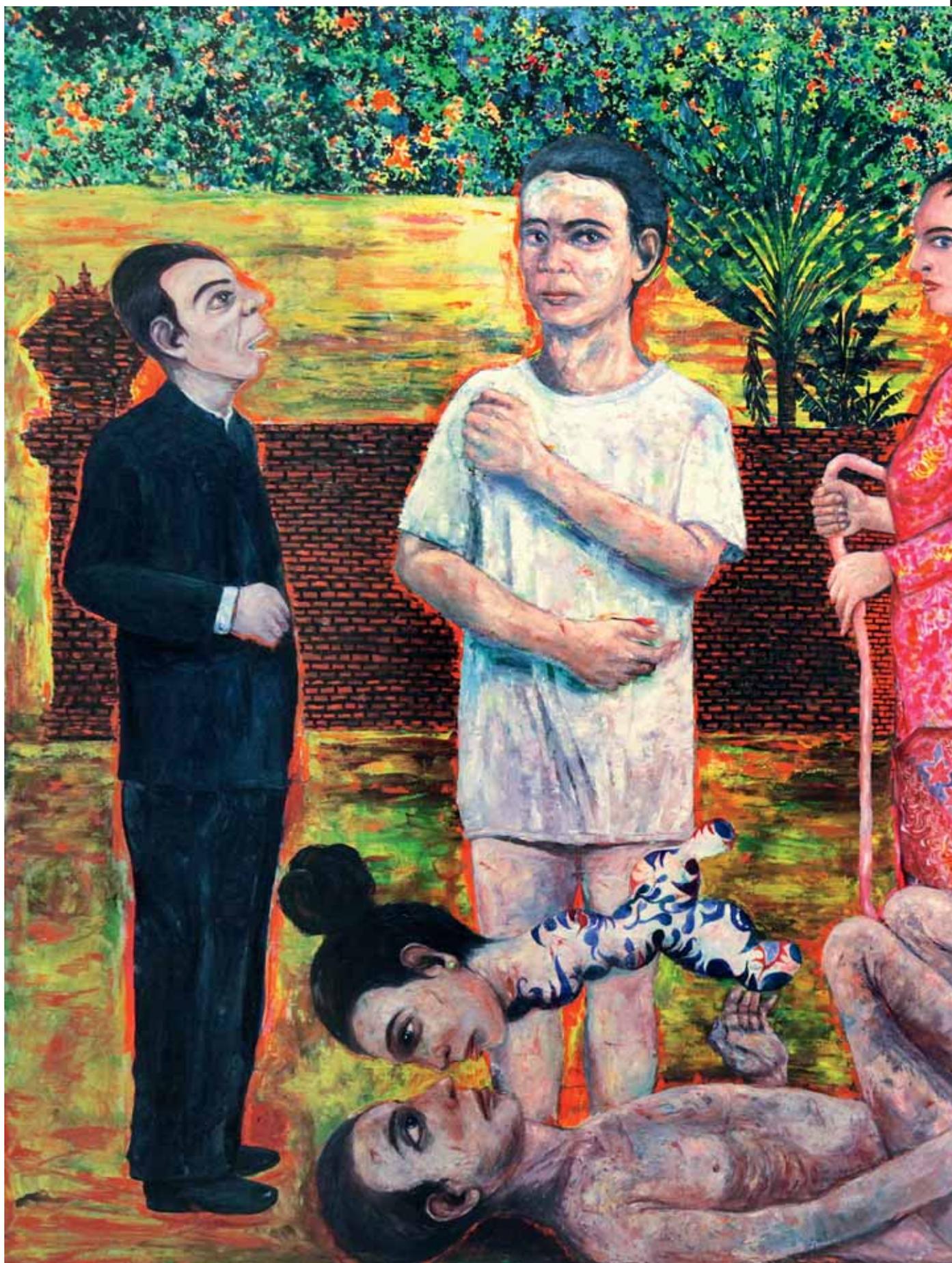
Taking on the persona of black goat in my work explicitly acknowledged my outsider status. I wanted to define a certain position in relationship to authority and investigate how, as an outsider, you can both lose and gain power. This also intertwined with experiences I was having in the US as a foreigner, as well as the uncomfortable experience of returning home changed. This feeling of being autonomous and misunderstood was channelled into work about identity and art politics.

NK: Your titles are capacious, suggesting geopolitical concerns such as *Borderless Floating Island*, *Crush Me*, *The Indonesian: No Time To Hide* and *Beginning—Perfect Enemy*. Can you elaborate on the role of titles as clues or triggers to political critique?

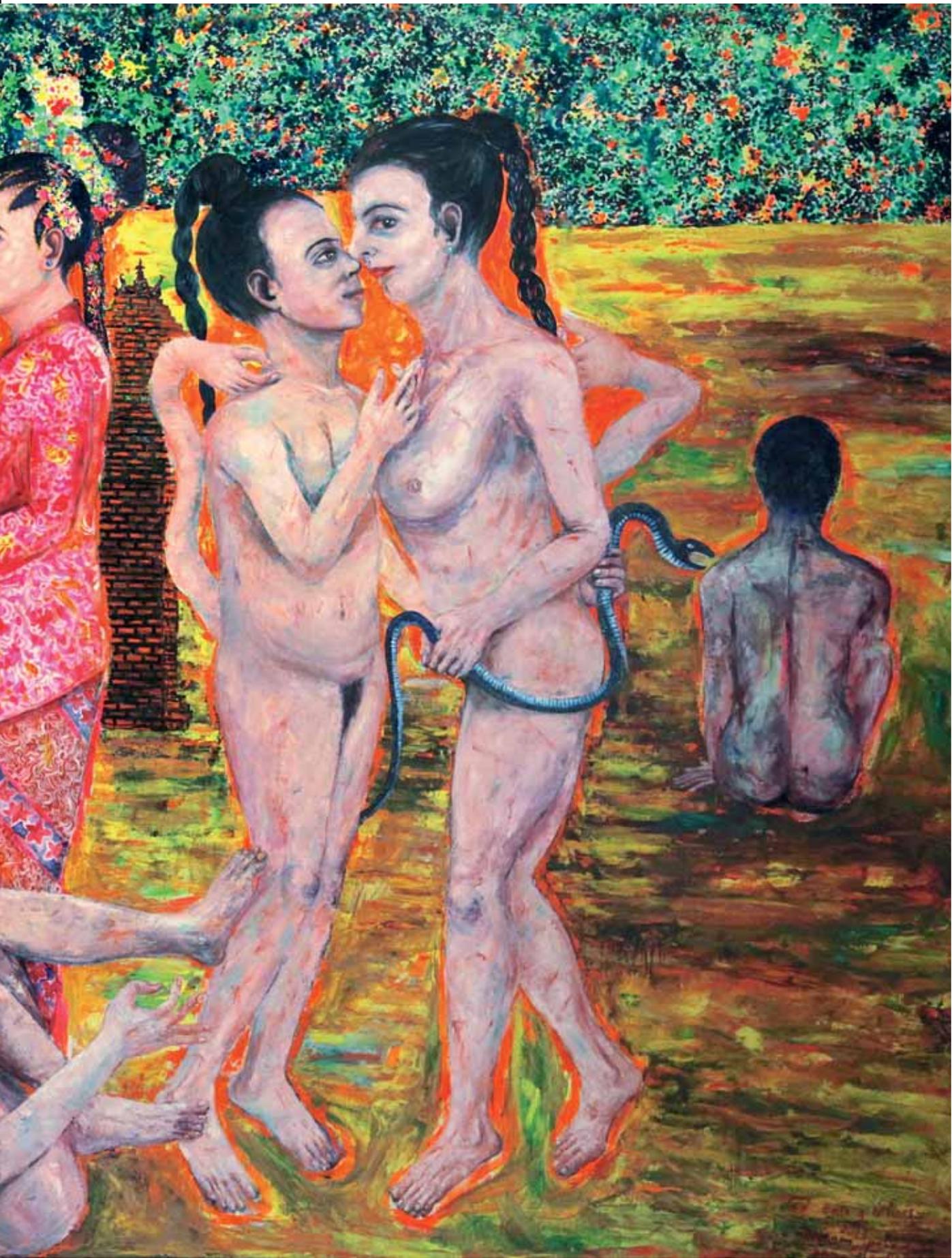
EW: The choice of titles for my work is really important to me; it is like going into a house or building through the front door or gate or like the skin a person is wrapped in. When choosing titles I sometimes think of them before creating the work or during the process. The title sometimes functions as a guide, a focal point for my thoughts.

NK: Can you discuss your new body of work, *Trilogy*, for Arndt?

EW: I decided I wanted to do a show that re-examines the ideas I presented in three bodies of work: *Love Me or Die*, *Untold Stories* and *Geo-Portrait*. *Trilogy* is three interconnected themes, issues that are urgent for me to talk about at this moment. The works are investigations and open questions. The original inspiration came from my painting entitled *Trilogy: Birth, Death, Life*, which is about fences and the circle of life. At the same time, I read about the Walter De Maria exhibition *Trilogies* at the Menil Collection and was also inspired to use the title, though with a different thought.



Reclaim Paradise: After the Agreement, 2013, oil and acrylic on linen, 200 x 300 cm



I have the tendency to forget things, but in fact the memories are so strong in my subconscious and emerge in my work. Maybe this is a kind of resistance to my mobility, a denial.

NK: There is a macabre humor in your new exhibition with figures comically yet violently interconnected. Can you discuss the role of conflict in relation to *I Am Watching You* (2013)?

EW: Well that's an interesting question because I am dealing with harmony and disharmony all the time in my work. I often use conflict and tension to locate harmony or peace. In everyday life in Java, dealing with conflict is commonplace because it is such a densely populated place and rules and regulations are not very clear. The sanctions are often relative and biased and involve factors like power, hierarchy and connections. *I Am Watching You* creates a moment of overlapping and colliding interests and desires. Who is looking, what is seen? Is this just 'the way things are' or are there forces at work like custom and tradition that ensure this is normal? Humor is one of the ways we feel close to each other, it shows that we understand the 'code,' that we

are intimate enough to understand ironic or sarcastic comments. But sometimes this can go too far and become an unconscious attack. We have a lot of dark humor in Indonesia, usually pointing to physical imperfections and sexuality. This is probably true in other parts of the world as well. It becomes a slippery way to abuse other people. In my work I use many different aspects of humor. Sometimes I show how humor is a veil to hide behind, but sometimes I use it to reveal sharp truths that push back against assumptions and standards.

NK: What music are you listening to?

EW: I've been listening a lot to Rodriguez, Grouplove, Luciano Pavarotti, Iwan Fals, Talking Heads and Cake lately. Also Bob Marley. Music fits with particular moments and I like lyrics that are strong but sometimes I also really love ridiculous, stupid songs.

My black goat identity developed in response to a dominant paradigm in the Indonesian art world about what constituted contemporary art and what were legitimate ways of practicing art and engaging with the art world.



Above: *Don't Touch Me Superhero*, 2008, spray paint, oil on linen, 200 x 150 cm
Following spread: *Geo-Family*, 2012- 2013, graphite, resin, color pigment, thread,
machine made Persian carpet, steel, 200 x 90 x 300 cm (work in progress)











Previous spread: *Double Portrait*, 2013, copper, resin, color pigment, thread, 120 x 140 cm

Above: *Trilogy: Birth, Life and Death*, 2013, acrylic, oil on canvas, 195 x 150 cm

Opposite: *Beginning Journey - Perfect Enemy*, 2013, brass, resin, color pigment, thread, 270 x 170 cm

Following spread: *Fence Chronicles*, 2010, aluminum plate, steel, car paint, polyurethane, 900 cm x 40 m
(Exhibition view of *Love Me or Die*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2010)







KEMENTERIAN KELAUTAN DAN PERIKANAN

Kol was getting stupid. This is new in Indonesia art.

Art is the soul of the people.

Art is the soul of the people.







Previous spread: *Undeclared Landscape*, 2013, oil on linen, 275 x 390 cm
Above: *To See and Be Seen - Endless*, 2012-2014, graphite, resin, mirrors, 255 cm x 9 cm diameter







Staging Narratives of Changing Identity

Previous spread (left to right):

Paradise Lost, 2012, aluminum, resin, color pigment, thread, 125 cm x 90 cm

Coalition: Borderless, 2012, brass, resin, color pigment, thread, 175 x 100 cm

The last half of the decade has transformed the studios of contemporary artists in Indonesia into busy and dynamic spaces where established artists and their assistants work while guests, curators, collectors, and gallery owners flow in and out without pause. The idea that Indonesian art has a place in the global art world feels real today. The distance between remote studios and the world's showrooms is rapidly narrowing. The globalization of art is of course not a new phenomenon; in the last twenty years, the art world has redefined the so-called global village illustrating the concept of six degrees of separation by revealing how elements of art from various parts of the world are more easily connected and by overcoming the boundaries that once existed.

Entang Wiharso chose a location for his Indonesian studio that is slightly away from the city center of Yogyakarta, creating a unique and tangible dynamic that eschews the usual industrial or minimalistic impressions that are now the trend in most other studios. Above the door we can see a sign that reads Black Goat Studios, a reference to an identity and concept that emerged in Entang's work over the last decade, as well as the team that now works with Entang in his studio.

Upon entering, we are greeted with a wide open space where Entang typically paints or maps out sketches that later form the foundation of his work. As we move deeper into the property, we see another studio meant for constructing large scale installations. Here we find aluminum sheets, graphite and other materials Entang frequently uses in his installations. The sound of grinders and saws, the constant hammering from all corners and the construction of large wooden crates indicate that Entang's installation works are continuously being made for various exhibitions, preparing new stories to be shared with the world.

Idea and Form: The Reciprocal Relationship

Although his current large-scale aluminum installations often feature colossal images, his formative series of aluminum cut-out works developed through a process of experimentation with printmaking. In preparation for a 2008 exhibition in Jakarta, Entang worked with a printing technique that was different from those commonly used in Indonesian contemporary art. He experimented with embossing using aluminum plates as the negative for the work. Ultimately he saw that these plates were an ideal artistic material and became increasingly interested in the plates as stand-alone art objects. This development was a watershed moment in Entang's artistic journey.

Although his journey of discovering and developing a new way of expressing ideas through his aluminum installations may seem like sheer happenstance, Entang can trace its development from an ideological perspective in his earlier work. Entang notes that in the 1980s, back when he was starting his artistic career, his creation of visual codes was affected by the surrealistic tendencies favored by artists in Yogyakarta (or Jogja as it is locally known). Although it did not develop into a real movement, the spirited advocacy for surrealism raised a particular passion for young artists seeking an alternative to the politically explicit work of the time in favor of greater use of symbolism.

Jogja's surrealism at that time featured extreme visual symbols, including deformed and reimagined organs or landscapes that showed the dark side of humanity. Entang's early work from the late 1980s revolved around similar themes although he covered different and varied topics compared to other artists of the period, such as politics, violence and the tension between traditional and modern identity. The visual codes he used lent an eerie and bleak atmosphere to his work which created a distance







Above and below (left fo right):
Give Me Love: Made in the USA, 2008, embossed ink print, 100 x 64 cm
Immune, 2008, embossed ink print, 100 x 64 cm
Colony, 2008, aluminun cut print, 66 x 100 cm
American Dream - Behind Her Story, 2008, embossed print, 56 x 76 cm



or barrier between his subject and certain audiences—making his thoughts and ideas seem even more remote to some.

Entang’s experimentation with aluminum broke down that barrier and he confirmed his belief, first expressed in his exhibition at the Indonesian National Gallery entitled *Idea is Form* in 1995, that the choice of material in his work was inextricably linked to the context contained within the material itself; content and form were symbiotic. Aluminum is an important symbol of modernity in a developing society like Indonesia, where traditionally handcrafted items are now being mass produced by machinery. Aluminum’s malleability, which allows it to be shaped into any form and lends itself to large-scale production, qualifies it as a new symbol of modernity in Indonesian daily life. Aluminum is a part of an emerging lifestyle that is fast-paced and industrialist and yet contains suggestions of sustainability due to its durability and non-disposable nature.

Entang sees the strategic value of this material within his creative process. By using a material closer to daily life in his work, Entang builds a bridge to communicate

his ideas to a broader public. While using a visual vocabulary he had developed over the years in conjunction with the new “cut-out” approach, he revealed the accessible nature of aluminum in popular shapes familiar to a broader audience. This remarkable treasury of images, many with deep connections to shadow puppetry, which informs and is informed by Indonesian history and society, is a strategic tool to communicate with the public. In a world where there is no longer a separation between the fine arts and the common household object, Entang introduces new forms of narrative that combined them both, underlining the fact that the materials he chooses are familiar and commonly recognized by all.

Thus Entang began processing aluminum and stainless steel with the aim to shift his creative model in a radical way. His exhibition at Ark Galerie in Jakarta in mid-2008 was his first presentation of this experimentation with aluminum, together with the manual print works that inspired his cut-out ideas. Focusing on his personal narrative of the split identity symbolized by the black goat, Entang made a large-scale narrative out of the aluminum plates.

Immune, 2008, spray paint, embossed ink print, 100 x 64 cm



Located in a medium-sized space on the lower level of the gallery, this installation piece successfully absorbed the audience's attention and brought them to a point where the symbolism was readily understood. It was visually stunning with a minimalistic impression, featuring sharp color contrasts between the jet black walls and the shimmery silver of glossy aluminum. The absence of a background landscape made the figures and the visual objects represented by Entang more visible and thus readable, focusing the audience on the symbols. The narrative threads behind these aluminum shapes reminded the audience of their own personal stories.

At the same time, it should be noted that the choice of aluminum cut-outs indirectly featured a new aesthetic approach. With this approach his pieces were lighter and less bleak compared to his previous work, making the work more accessible and admired. Regarding the use of aluminum as a medium, Suwarno Wisetrotomo wrote:

Through the use of aluminum, Entang's effort to bring about sharp contrasting values can be felt. Odd shapes or figures, for instance, are presented via complex techniques; the cutting and the puncturing

Your Power is Mine, 2009, aluminum, 200 x 550 cm



feels almost decorative because of the many grooved details which fill the work. The material implies something solid, hard and sharp, while the ornamental composition seems to master the temperament of the material.

In my opinion, Entang's artistic practice reflects the ways in which Indonesian artists have always desired to connect with traditions. In the 1970s, the idea of returning to tradition to establish the 'Indonesian' identity was widely disseminated amidst the influx of pop culture that was influencing the new generation in almost all

parts of the world. Indonesian artists of the period, such as W.S. Rendra or Sardon W. Kusumo, saw how using tradition as part of an aesthetic vocabulary was an important contribution to the early growth of contemporary art in the country. Rendra explored forms of folk theater while Kusumo traveled the countryside to investigate new forms of dance, eventually bringing tradition-laden art to global society.

Today, the perspective towards tradition has begun to shift. The contemporary artist is still exploring traditions, but no longer to confirm an identity as the 'other' in



global contemporary art. Moreover, I observe that today's contemporary artist perceives tradition as an integral and unconscious part of identity, coupled with the belief that there is truly no originality in art creation anymore. There is no longer a distinction between the traditional and the modern from the point of view of contemporary art today. This shift is interesting because it allows artists to be critical toward their own traditions and that of other cultures. Rather than merely exploring tradition, Entang is one of the few artists who seeks to align various cultures and backgrounds, the traditional and the modern, and approach them proportionally and not just through romanticism, which was the common trend in the 1980s.

The words of Jim Supangkat, who said that Entang is truly not a traditionalist but instead is a part of a generation that does not need to question its ethnic identity, remain valid.

Collage and Comic: The New Search of Entang Wiharso

Entang himself was born of a generation which, I think, has a different cultural reaction towards products of pop

culture, including comics, than today's artists in their 20s and 30s. Post-2000, comics became one of the more popular visual devices used by young artists in Indonesia and were frequently transferred onto canvas, drawings or animation. This was arguably the long-term effect of the joint activism of the Yogyakarta-based artist collective Apotik Komik in the 1990s who promoted non-mainstream images as part of the contemporary art vocabulary. This trend stemmed from the desire to combine fine art and pop art that was also influenced by an affinity to the pop art works of Warhol, Lichtenstein or Jasper Johns. Further, the generation succeeding Apotik Komik was heavily influenced by Japanese comics and popular US illustration magazines such as *Juxtapose*.

However, like Entang, the generation of artists born in the 1960s (see also the visual vocabulary of Heri Dono or Agung Kurniawan) tapped into comics in a different way. They perceived comics as part of the introduction of modern products into Indonesia at the beginning of the New Order, the term used to describe the rule of Indonesian President Suharto (1965-1998). Comics existed in daily life alongside popular music found on

Above: *Comic Book Series*, 2009, aluminum, dimensions variable
 (Exhibition view of *South East Asia B(l)ooming*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy, 2009)
 Opposite: *Dreaming Machine: Chronicle Wall* (detail), 2011-2012, brass, aluminum, resin, color pigment, thread, 700 x 1400 cm





THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN IMAGINE

I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN IMAGINE

ART IS FUN
ART IS FOR
EVERYONE

I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN IMAGINE

THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN IMAGINE

You are acting
up. This is
an Indonesian
art



MY IDENTITY
IS MY LAST DEFENSE
IN THE ART WORLD

INDONESIA
ART

[Entang's generation] perceived comics as part of the introduction of modern products into Indonesia at the beginning of the New Order, [they] did not experience comics and popular culture as given, but as a long-term process that included the 'competition' of various new cultural products entering and seeking a foothold in a young society....

the radio and cassettes, with television still a luxury item for a particular social class. Comics in Indonesia explored the stories of Mahabharata and Ramayana, or characters such as Tatang, based on traditional and everyday life. Through television Entang also savored comics from the West in series such as *The Adventures of Tintin* and through cartoon superheroes like Captain America, Phantom, Superman, Batman, Spiderman, etc. This generation also consumed comics like Lucky Luke or martial arts stories by Kho Ping Ho. I think that in contrast to the 1980s generation, Entang's generation did not experience comics and popular culture as given, but as a long-term process that included the 'competition' of various new cultural products entering and seeking a foothold in a young society, such that the transition born of incorporating this influx of new cultural products became a part of everyday life. Dr. Mary-Louise Totton, in her essay for the catalog for Entang's 2011 show *Second Skin: Peeling Back the Layers*, describes how he builds a complex narrative in his comic-based work where the audience is not directed by a linear story line. Entang instead combines, in one narration, the male-female relationships, ambition and passion, art and power, identity and the lines of ancestry.

Though I have described the experience that led Entang to develop the initial idea of the cut-out (a term coined by Entang a little further down the road once he was more distanced and thus able to map his creative journey), in fact the roots of the idea began in 2003 when he began creating and using metal saws in his work. In the beginning these jagged-blade saws were used to represent issues of disturbing violence, focused mainly on exploring the events leading up to and after the 1998 political crisis and Suharto's downfall. Entang began to feel that it was no longer enough to use canvas as a medium to express

his thoughts and at that point, I think, the complexity of the issues he was dealing with furthered his passion to try new things.

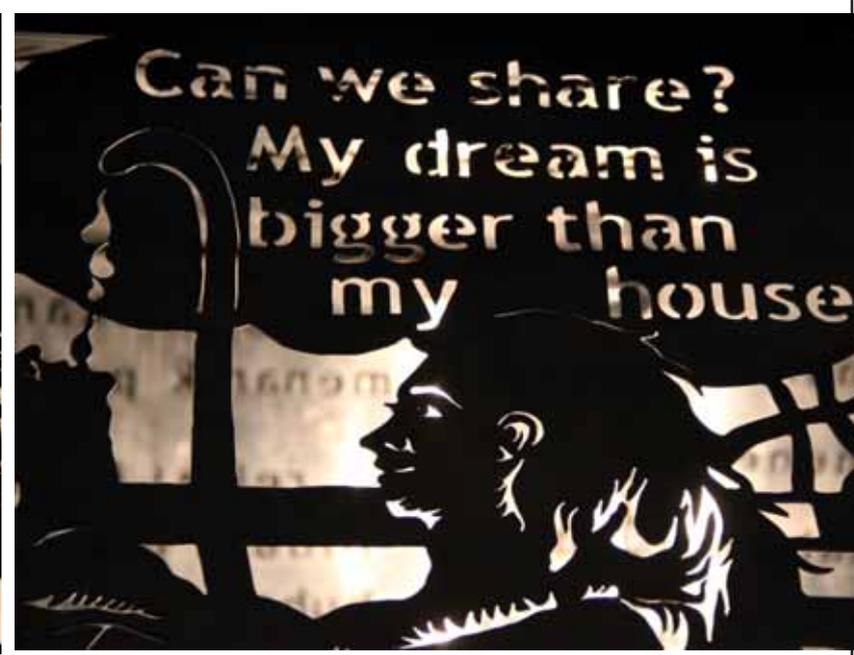
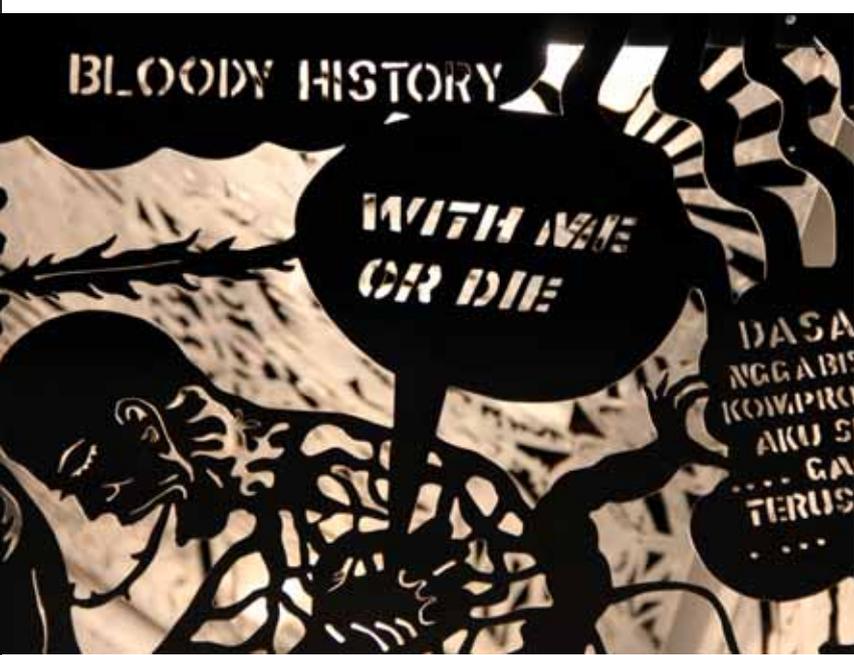
The installation *I Love You Too Much* (2004) represents a marker in Entang's two-decade-long creative journey as an artist. In this work, he fashioned saws in odd sizes, cut straight from steel plate, to highlight an environment of tension and acute fears. These massive steel saws, along with dozens of forms resembling babies and red balloons, formed a gripping installation. The babies were littered on the ground like scattered corpses, some were flying in the air, manifested as little angels without wings, and some even swung between flying saw blades. From these itinerant saws, we can see the roots of his aluminum installation work.

Not only does this pivotal work reveal his strength in describing the issues of violence, but more profoundly it illustrates the chaos and paradoxes of a society dealing with democracy in its infancy. Entang possesses an awareness of how each material has political content relating to its effectiveness in conveying specific ideas. For example, the use of steel for the hand-cut saws, with rust and stains coating the surface, are a manifestation of the desire to create symbolic artifacts of a time that has passed—one that left a 'black stain' resulting from the clashes and bloodshed. When reflecting on his aesthetic development and use of materials, Entang stated:

These [the choice of materials] were all direct causes of ideas, issues and themes I explored through my works. I choose my materials carefully to support the thesis of my work and to put forward and encourage the messages I wish to convey.¹

At this time, Entang also began to incorporate elements into his paintings that resembled collage. One of his early works incorporating collage is *Me as Teddy Bear*

¹ Interview with Entang Wiharso (unrecorded), October 2012 at Parsley Cafe, Yogyakarta



Remembering and forgetting are both a kind of learning. Memories are the bridges which tell us who rode this way and why. They are the heartbeat of our identity, echoes of our thoughts and desires. Memory is the most precious gift of one generation to the next.





(2004) which was exhibited at KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, Finland. In this large-scale painting, Entang attached elements like saws to the surface of the painting and deliberately made them part of the main narrative. Looking at this strategy, Entang seems to combine and deconstruct, but at the same time, emphasize. Although there is a solid awareness of technique and material in Entang's creative process, in his collage works we can also see his great, spontaneous energy. Using collage in his works reflects his unwillingness to be a part of convention as well as his desire to interlink with other histories. In "The Object of Post Criticism," Gregory Ulmer refers to collage as an intervention with the world, designed to change reality, not reflect it. The art of the collage encourages the artist to let ideas grow and respond to each other while at the same time achieving harmony. As Rebecca Jones notes in her discussion of collage:

...works being done today act as part of the culture rather than a comment on it. Work that uses

pre-existing images, forms, and ideas and leaves the new works open for interpretations and associations from the viewers, acts as an active experience rather than a static idea or form.²

Subsequent to creating these works, Entang became increasingly interested in experimenting with new materials and creating new works to support his theses and widespread ideas. His studio evolved into a laboratory; he was searching for a new vocabulary and visual codes that were wild and mischievous to describe this new creative phase that was enveloping him. Not only was he experimenting with new materials, Entang also challenged himself and his team to create new tools that would allow his visual ideas to be realized. Overcoming technical barriers, improvising and creating his own level of perfectionism were challenges he faced with enthusiasm.

² Rebecca Jones. "Appropriation, Collage and the Cultural Condition." <http://theorynow.blogspot.com/2007/01/appropriation-collage-and-cultural.html>, 2 January 2007. Accessed 18 February 2014.

Opposite: *I Love You Too Much*, 2005, wood, fabric, steel, ceramic, light bulb, electrical cable, 400 x 600 x 300 cm (Exhibition view *Inter-Eruption*, Bentara Budaya, Jakarta, Indonesia)
 Above: *Unspeakable Victim: The Story Behind Superhero and Black Goat Colony*, 2008, acrylic, oil, asphalt, aluminum, galvanized steel, dimensions variable (Exhibition view *Black Goat Space*, Ark Galerie, Jakarta, Indonesia)







Cross-Cultural, Cross-Discipline: Installation and Performance Art

At the same time that he was developing new ways of working, the trips he took around the world, breaking through geo-political borders with their complex discourse of globalization, led Entang to formulate the concept of his new works. Displacement and the crossing of cultures made him a 'hybrid human' and that resulted in a larger narrative which he represented in the form of

'black goat.' This 'black goat' was a symbol drawn from the identity complex he frequently experienced when crossing geo-political borders. Prior to Entang's further exploration of new materials, he embarked on another project, which he called Puppet Blues, concerning the recurring question of identity, this time drawing on traditional cross-cultural heritage originating with shadow puppetry. For this project he created oversized, ornamented and jointed figures from cardstock and

Previous spread: Exhibition view, *Wind From the East* with *Good Morning Mr. Bush* (2002) and *Polluted by Norm* (2002), Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland, February 2007
Above: *No Hero No Cry*, 2006-2007, oil, acrylic, spray paint on canvas mounted on aluminum, 300 x 1000 cm



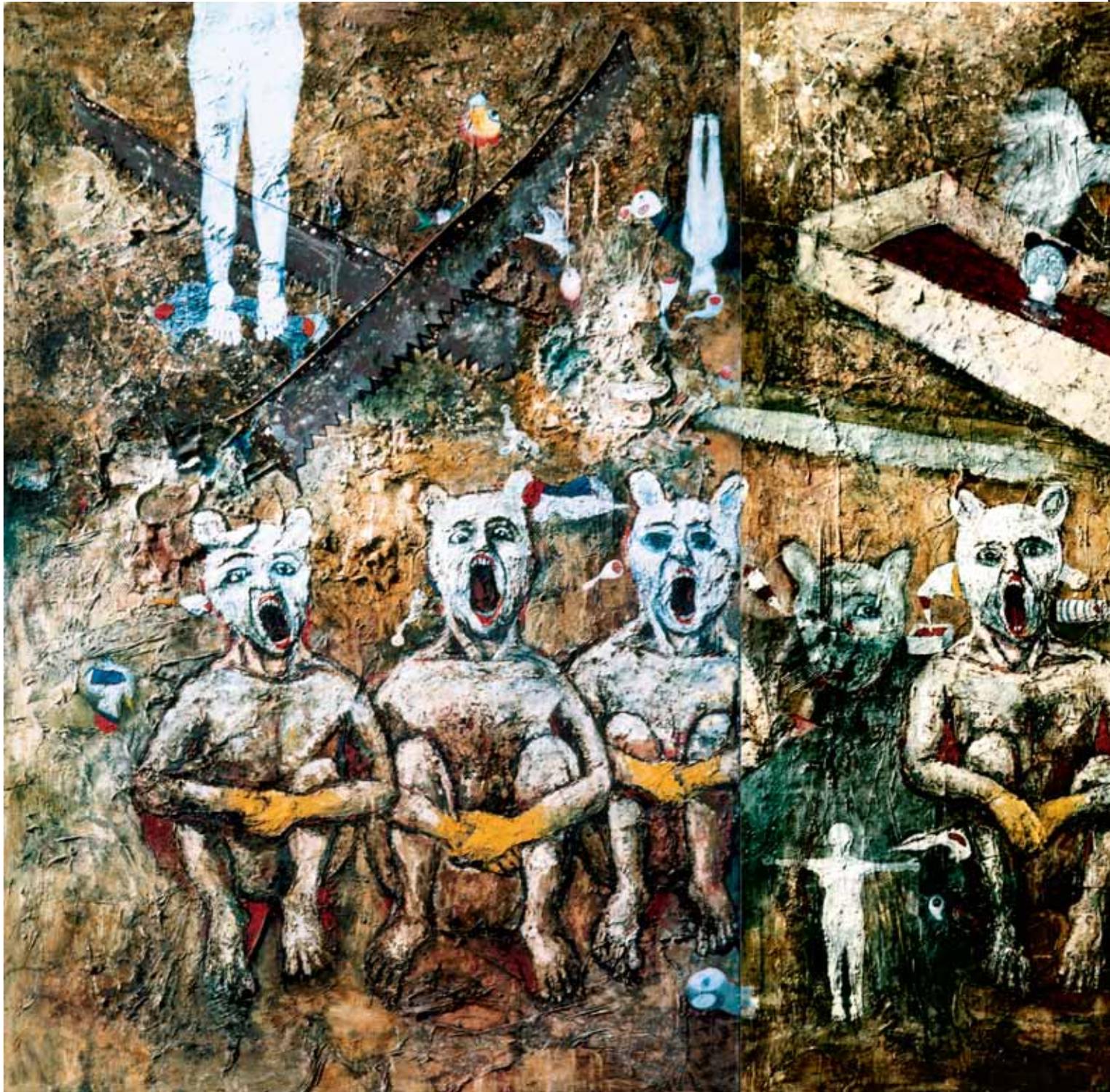
sheet aluminum which he cut and painted. These works hung from the ceiling and were lit to cast shadows on the walls. He explained:

At that time, I saw how my own identity changed depending on where I was, and through people's (wrong) assumption of my background and beliefs. I wanted to express this condition/reality in a work that allows for layered narratives, to reposition reality

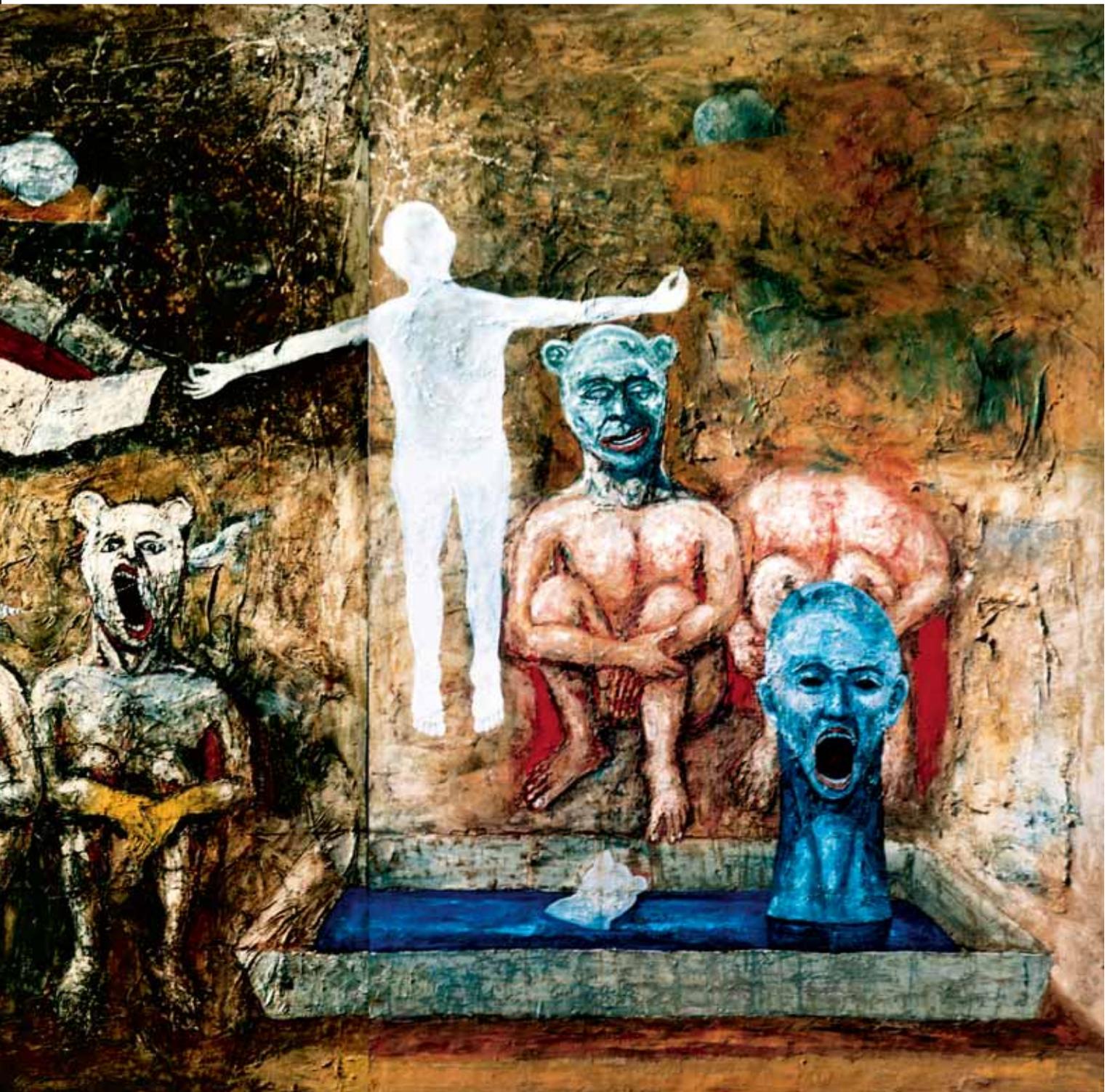
and also a work that incorporates the environment as a 'staging device' to create context.³

In addition to marking his interest in the cut-out form that would later manifest into his aluminum cut-out installations, his shadow puppetry project also confirmed

³ Interview with Entang Wiharso (unrecorded), October 2012.



Me as Teddy Bear, 2004, acrylic, oil, steel, resin on canvas, 300 x 600 cm (triptych)



Entang possesses an awareness of how each material has political content relating to its effectiveness in conveying specific ideas.

an approach which I think is relevant to understanding Entang's recent works: the starting point of his interest in incorporating performance into his art. Although he initially mentioned that *Puppet Blues* was a project created to represent the divided identity he experienced from living partly in Indonesia, with all its connection to its culture, in contrast to the reality of living in contemporary society in the US, in fact references to tradition were very strongly displayed in this work. It is interesting how the desire to create a more experimental installation actually stemmed from tradition. In this work we see references found in the other art disciplines, particularly the performing arts. Indeed, the categorization of art into fine art, performance art, music and so on is part of modern knowledge, which tends to strongly limit a wide range of various phenomena; in the past, all forms of art were celebrated together as a phenomenon of life, existing across forms of visual arts, stage, literature and music.

Interdisciplinary art is something that is almost a certainty in the realm of contemporary art today, like going back to the pre-modernist situation with its high spontaneity. Exhibitions of contemporary art today involve people from other disciplines: film directors, choreographers, musicians, actors, dancers, architects and technology experts. Interdisciplinary work is not only meaningful due to its emphasis on the 'process' instead of the 'product'; in fact process enhances the desire to see something from a different perspective, to take, borrow, adapt and even recreate forms born of history and within a context different from the ones cultivated before. Beyond Entang's prominent use of cut-out in his work, I also notice how his work was increasingly transformed into a stage, a space between theater and dance, perhaps. Whereas the series of aluminum and canvas cut-outs in *Puppet Blues* make powerful reference to shadow puppetry, the work *Expanded Dreams Tableau: Wagon Series* (2011), exhibited at ArtJOG 2011 had a three-

dimensional, stage quality that expanded to include actors, properties and a set, just like a real performance.

When traced back, the stage-like quality of this series of works has its point of origin in 2003 when Entang created an installation entitled *Polluted by Norms*, one of three works included for an exhibition at KIASMA Museum of Contemporary Art in Helsinki, Finland. Exhibited in *Wind from the East*, this piece features a large table with eating utensils populated by a grouping of three-dimensional animal-like figurines, above which is hung an upside-down table with embedded saws. This image was a radical theatrical portrayal, one that was real but at the same time filled with fantasy and imagination beyond the content that contained harsh critiques and a sharp questioning of established norms.

In addition, Entang also often creates works of art within a performance framework. Most of his performances, besides featuring himself, also invite the participation of the audience as 'actors.' One of his most phenomenal is *Lost and Found*, a performance conducted in 2010 where the people involved were important to the art world of Indonesia, top collectors, gallerists and opinion-makers. This performance, which takes the form of a banquet, was an interactive performance using a standard plot with particular references to certain concepts—those not usually found in other performance arts in Indonesia.

As an artist, does Entang consider himself a choreographer or a director? How did Entang transform the narrative element in this work so that a still object has equal power with the stage that relies on dynamic movement? I think Entang placed himself as a witness of his featured realities. Once in a while he composes events, but these are still linked to experiences we face daily. I think, using this position, he tries to get the audience to actively participate in following his narrative; they can manipulate and choose their own plotline, see the kinds



of realities that are rejected by the ‘masses,’ and build their own narratives. In *Lost and Found* he gave the conclusion to those who both watched and participated, and thus he built an indirect dialogue with the audience. Entang relied on both chaotic and festive elements while at the same time placing elements that represented riots and sentences filled with humor and sarcasm to propel the audience’s imagination forward.

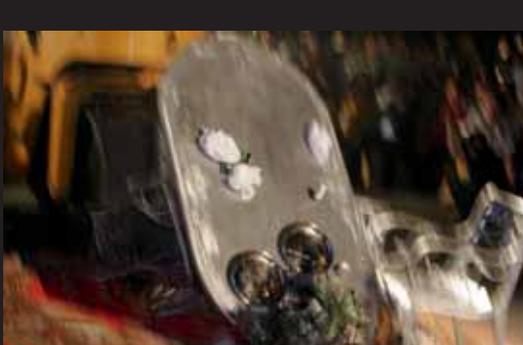
The second strategy Entang often uses is size and scale, creating massive works that grab the attention of the audience from the first impression and thereafter pull them in to explore the sub-narratives within the work. This massive scale is a contrast to the detailed nuances which are presented in an almost hyper-realistic approach, thus giving time for the audience to observe more detailed visual codes. Thus there are many layers of

realities that can be traced by the audience while at the same time becoming an active part of the work.

Epilogue

From the research I have done on Entang’s work created in the last decade, I find myself brimming with interesting questions about the history of contemporary art in Indonesia. What does tradition mean for today’s generation, my generation, for instance? How does today’s artist subtly provoke his audience, when that seems to be the only way for art to have meaning? Will today’s artist endeavor to move out of his comfort zone, experience something new and risky, not just for himself but also to criticize the regime of power that continues to change? Entang shows that changes in artistic strategy and aesthetic vision are born not merely out of the upheaval within the artist but also are a result of his

Above: *Expanded Dreams Tableau: Wagon Series (detail)*, 2011, resin, graphite, color pigment, thread, light bulbs, steel bar, cables, wood, LCD projector, 400 x 1300 cm (Exhibition view ART/JOG 2011, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia)
Following spread: *Lost and Found*, performance at *Space and Image*, Ciputra World Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia, April 2010









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interaction with the world around him that is often filled with tension.

At this point, I think, it is important to mention how a creator/artist is basically a political agent of culture who is both active and qualified. Entang's artistic practices demonstrate his ability to read and map the art situation and put Indonesian art into a global art practice. He also reveals how the art of Indonesia has a role in the governance of life encompassing social, political, economic and cultural contexts. A cultural agent does not only promote cultural products as they are commonly understood, but moreover continuously challenges himself to criticize his own work practices and open a network of ideas with other cultural actors in order to advocate for universal situations in a world full of unfairness and political inequality.

With regards to his own personal growth as an artist, Entang shows how the artist himself metamorphosed in

response to various contexts and situations. Now in the second half of his artistic career, when he is already part of a group of established artists in Indonesia, Entang Wiharso has displayed a rejection of static situations in the creative process. Today, the ideas of change, speed and a world perpetually in motion is one of the mainstream discourses in contemporary art. By taking in the 'big picture' of the world today, Entang has reflected on his personal experience on the global stage and identified the demand for change and the necessity of adjusting to what has been referred to as 'the present and the now.' This demand for change has developed a desire in Entang to question the relevance of his own artistic practices, be it his aesthetic vision or artistic ideology. During the last few years, Entang Wiharso made a great leap beyond the stereotypes, surpassing the establishment, and beyond what has almost become a routine. The process of art is truly a continuous effort of great leaps forward, and this pushes the artist to always remain on the cutting edge of idea and expression.

Entang became increasingly interested in experimenting with new materials and creating new works to support his theses and widespread ideas. His studio evolved into a laboratory.... Not only was he experimenting with new materials, Entang also challenged himself and his team to create new tools that would allow his visual ideas to be realized.

A creator/artist is basically a political agent of culture who is both active and qualified. Entang's artistic practices demonstrate his ability to read and map the art situation and put Indonesian art into a global art practice. He also reveals how the art of Indonesia has a role in the governance of life encompassing social, political, economic and cultural contexts.



Above: *Temple of Hope* (detail), 2010, stainless steel frame, aluminum, resin, color pigment, light bulbs, cable, lava stone, 350 x 300 x 200 cm
Following spread: *Bus Chronicles*, 2010, car seats, steel frame, steering wheel, aluminum plate, tires, flat screen TV, video player, sound system, dimensions variable (Exhibition view *Love Me or Die*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2010)

Ku sukuri terus,
sampai mati.

Kasih sayang... Sialan...
Selama hidup, tidak ada
gila ber... Ayah gila...
Ayah gila...





Love Me or Die

This body of work was presented in a solo exhibition featuring painting on canvas and paper, prints, drawing, sculpture, installation and video work. Curated by Jim Supangkat, the exhibition was accompanied by a 251-page catalogue *"Love Me or Die"* published by Galeri Canna, Jakarta with contributions by Jim Supangkat, Suwarno Wisetrotomo, Amanda Katherine Rath and Syamsul Barry. A selection of work was subsequently exhibited in Italy in 2011. A review in the *Jakarta Post* states, *"'Love Me or Die' is considered this year's most stunning and best-executed exhibition in the National Gallery Jakarta"* and *C-Arts Magazine* reports, *"Attended by a record-breaking number of visitors during its 10-day run...Love Me or Die has created something of a benchmark for future national gallery exhibitions...Blatantly honest, autobiographical and self-confessional, Love Me or Die expresses the artist's desire for and loss of faith in the possibility of communion without being devoured, individual need and autonomy without greed and selfishness, love without betrayal and violence, religion and belief without bigotry and intolerance."*

Exhibition view, *Love Me or Die*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2010



21 - 31 October 2010
 Galeri Nasional Indonesia
 Jakarta, Indonesia

13 April – 28 May 2011
 Primo Marella Gallery
 Milan, Italy



Preparation and events, *Love Me or Die*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2010





Exhibition View, *Love Me or Die*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy, 2011





Preparation and events, *Love Me or Die*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy, 2011



The Vibrating Harrow: Love and Loathing in Entang Wiharso's Recent Work (Part II)

First published in the book *"Love Me or Die"* (Jakarta: Galeri Canna, 2010)

The first part of this essay [see page 168] was published in relation to Entang's *Intoxic* exhibition under the title of "Unease and Disease: Beyond the Veil of Social Order in Entang Wiharso's Work" (2007), yet the arguments I made therein remain the ground upon which to critically engage Entang's artistic practice and works in "*Love Me or Die*."

"*Love Me or Die*" is an ambitious exhibition comprising recent and new works of painting, installation, reliefs, and video projects. In it, Entang presents something of a survey of many of the thematic and formal investigations that have preoccupied him since 2007 to the present. "*Love Me or Die*" is both a body of work and concept possessing an unapologetic honesty that has become a general characteristic of his work over the course of his career. The exhibition is blatantly autobiographical and self-confessional, exploring the artist's desire for and possible loss of faith in the possibility of communion without being devoured, individual need and autonomy without greed and selfishness, love without betrayal and violence, religion and religious faith without bigotry and intolerance.

I don't intend to overwhelm my discussion of "*Love Me or Die*" with tedious theory. Yet, I want to use a generalized reading of Judith Butler's assumptions in *Undoing Gender* (2004)¹ regarding an individual's desire for 'recognition' and escape to further connect some of the ideas I discussed in "Unease and Disease" (in Part I) with Entang's recent work. According to Butler, individuals 'do' gender according to certain social norms and it is in the 'doing' or performing gender that we as humans are recognized and recognizable (legible). Recognition is that which confers personhood, and which derives from certain social norms. People, individuals, desire recognition in order to survive. Without recognition, without gaining legibility, the individual ceases being seen or is never seen as human, as a member of some

group. Yet, Butler also posits the necessity and possibility of gender transgression, meaning the desire to escape capture, or recognition, by way of prevailing social norms that hurt and erase. In other words, she theorizes the simultaneous doing and undoing of gender, identity, personhood, as well as posits a site and place of agency. Entang's work itself speaks to an individual's ambivalent desire for both membership and the deferral of such desire for membership in order to gain some semblance of distance from the hurtful process of recognition or 'knowing' by way of some kind of inscription.

I may feel that without some recognizability I cannot live [survive]. But I may also feel that the terms by which I am recognized make life unbearable. This is the juncture from which critique emerges, where critique is understood as an *interrogation of the terms by which life is constrained in order to open up the possibility of different modes of living*; in other words, *not to celebrate difference* as such but to establish more inclusive conditions for sheltering and maintaining life that resists models of assimilation. (Butler 2004, 4)

Butler's conception of 'the desire for recognition' and 'different modes of living' are, I think, apt and helpful in the present discussion of Entang's work and practice, the latter of which is often a kind of 'improvisation within a scene of constraint.' For instance, at times, he projects his own subjectivity, including gender, as something that he 'does' on his own. Yet, inevitably, he tempers such presumptions of autonomy with its impossibility, by showing the viewer that the terms that make up his identity and gender are from the start outside himself, coming from a myriad of locations of what the artist calls 'the system.'

¹ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004).







Left to right: *Your Pleasure as Poison: Comic Book Series*, 2008, aluminum, 140 x 120 cm
I Have Deserved My Power: Comic Book Series, 2008, aluminum, 140 x 120 cm

The exhibition...explores the artist's desire for...individual need and autonomy without greed and selfishness, love without betrayal and violence, religion and religious faith without bigotry and intolerance.

Continuing with Butler's argument, it is possible to suggest that Entang's recent work, as well as his work over the last decade, visualizes one's desire for recognition, and the processes of conferring recognition and the withholding of it. In the artist's work, both schemes of conferring and withholding are sites of power by which people are differentially formed. Such ideas are common enough today in critical artistic practice, including Entang's. Yet, here, in *"Love Me or Die,"* he often points to how certain people are recognized as *less than*, as incomplete, as incorrect, and how some are not recognized at all, hence socially (and otherwise) defaced and erased.

Coupled with this desire for recognition and the pain of its conferral and withholding is the artist's suggestion of the advantages of being *less than* 'recognizable' to prevailing social expectations and norms. *"Love Me or Die"* presents Entang's articulation of the effects of one's social belonging, and how at times estrangement would be preferable to gaining legibility via a set of norms in a 'system' that can hurt and erase.

In many respects, Entang's work appeals to the senses rather than the intellect in the ways he creates structures of estrangement. As such, many of his works undermine the familiar—never wholly absent but always on the verge of disappearing—by his inclusion of the uncanny and the alien. *"Love Me or Die"* mocks and subverts those things that the artist finds abhorrent and painful by, at times, taking recourse in the abysmal and the absurd. Entang seems to want to shake our faith in the obvious and familiar, but just enough to make us fear the lives we lead over death.

Estrangement implies some kind of distance, or Entang's ability to put off his desire for membership, even as there is his simultaneous longing for something (norms) that would allow him to feel whole and connected, that

allows him to survive. In other words, and not to put too fine a point on it, Entang often puts forward images and tableaux that suggest human agency as fraught with paradox, the very condition and thus the possibility of agency.

"Love Me or Die" as title and concept for Entang Wiharso's ambitious solo exhibition at the National Gallery in Jakarta reflects what he conceives of as "power positions that exist in the realm of politics, religious fanaticism, obsessive love, brand marketing, etc." It warns of the dangers of rigidity and inflexibility, as well as obsessive love, infatuation, alienation, and narcissistic reflection. As an ultimatum, 'love me or die' implies impasse and subsequent danger and violence. In these works, obsessive attachment is not necessarily just in the personal relationships between lovers, between husband and wife, but also manifests itself in the form of religious bigotry, cultural jingoism, and prejudice that marks a person as 'member,' but also painfully as different, as forever the outsider and, at worst, non-human (unrecognizable). The artist further explains that at base, in this body of work he articulates what he sees are certain of the pathologies or dominant "chronic, systemic conditions that suppress our internal, individual dreams and desires." In exploring and articulating these larger issues, Entang's work also engages the ways in which people and groups build barriers or fences as both a way to protect the sovereignty of the individual or the group as well as a means by which to keep others out, to deny them. In this exhibition, Entang explores barriers as both dangerous and necessary coping mechanisms, as well as thresholds to be transgressed for the sake of positive change.

My aim so far has been for the text to provide possible avenues of general interpretation rather than directly alight on any one work of art. My purpose has been to establish what I see are consistent yet intensifying aspects underlying, driving, and giving ethical and moral force

Entang explores barriers as both dangerous and necessary coping mechanisms, as well as thresholds to be transgressed for the sake of positive change.

Fractal of Skin... can also suggest the ways in which human beings attempt to beautify and cover over true nature, to put forward a false self....

to Entang Wiharso's work over the last decade. In previous writings, I have discussed certain of these aspects in more detail and depth. What I wish to underscore here is that in his recent work, in his artistic and conceptual practice, the force of the harrow—a cultivating device that inscribes onto and smoothes surfaces—is intensifying, picking up speed, and penetrating surface in new and critical ways.

In this section, I isolate skin and ornament as two key themes, sites, places, metaphors, and surfaces in *“Love Me or Die”* that are as insistent as the title of the exhibition. For this purpose, I select only a few of the many works in the exhibition, and one that is not included in the show, to build a narrative of ‘Skin/Ornament’ in Entang's work.

Fractal of Skin, consisting of large panels of painted all-over patterning suggesting an abstract image of animal hides or pelts, is perhaps the most visually ambiguous piece of the exhibition. The piece carries much of the conceptual weight and even burden of the exhibition itself. Though possessing a kind of gravitas that begs and demands to be seen conceptually from an oblique angle, the overall wall patterning engulfs, overwhelms and frustrates vision, being the first wall (barrier) to engage-confront the viewer entering the main gallery.

Back in 2005, I wrote that in Entang's work: “Human beings as individuals and members of society, or various groups therein, seem to have forgotten themselves in the process of defining who they are, [having] constructing boundaries around themselves, and often trampling upon those who are not like them. Representations that [people] construct of others...always essentialize.” Too seldom does the human community strive toward compassion and unity. Too seldom do we question whether our representations and assumptions of others are accurate, helpful, or hurtful. While I wrote this

specifically about his work for *Intoxic*, the works in *“Love Me or Die”* testify to the artist's continued concerns over identity and the painful gift of representation, of recognition, as well as lack of recognition. From the very first work, the viewer is asked to reconsider cultural and social relationships that at best nourish and support, at worst crush and destroy. Such issues and questions are embodied in *Fractal of Skin*, a work that symbolizes for the artist the stereotypical image that comes to mark the body.

For this mural, the artist turns to the power and simplicity of color, in this case black and gold in creating a conceptual work that plays off the idea that we are marked by our skins. The skins the artist intimates are those black and white, simplistic, generalizing, stereotypical images people have of one another, and the simplification of cultural and religious complexity. This is implied in the two-tone, black and gold, all-over pattern, metaphorically misreading and covering over what Entang argues is the complexity of being human and the human being that lies beneath the skin, beneath the surface. Abstract animal prints in this case refer to ways in which individuals are denied the “fundamental rights of others to exist as individuals with [their] various needs, concerns and motivations.” With simplification comes misunderstanding, misrecognition and pain. He aspires to get people to think beyond black and white terms, to “spark in people the desire and ability to see an issue from more than one perspective, to take an interest in what others have to say.”

Additionally, *Fractal of Skin* can be seen as aestheticizing a process of symbolic and potentially physical violence. Yet, it can also suggest the ways in which human beings attempt to beautify and cover over true nature, to put forward a false self (not to suggest a true self is ever complete or any more real).



The decorative gold and black surface suggests lifestyle, sophistication, and glamour 'appropriate' to a rich clientele as if entering a *bouteeeeeque*. The business of art is *excluseeeeee* and dependent on brand names, brand marketing: Gucci/Entang. As such, and through a kind of veiled self-mockery, Entang taps a certain thread in the discourse of contemporary art in Indonesia, that part which has traditionally shunned the ornament as superfluous and void of meaning.

When I visited his studio in 2009, the artist discussed with me his critical use of ornament:

I use ornament in some of my work not because it means anything to the piece itself, but because it is hated in the art discourse; it is considered decadent, meaningless, without purpose. I am bothered by this

and so want to make waves, to deliberately bother the eye of the art world.

Entang uses ornament as a sign of protest against being told what is possible in contemporary art and what is not. For him, such rigidity and disavowal bespeak modernist or outmoded assumptions of what signifies as good art, what signifies as an object of art. Here, the artist implies that he deliberately tries to take an outsider position to dominant assumptions in the discourse of art specific to Indonesia.

Similar issues, that of identity given and authored, and the strategic use of ornament as self-mockery, are articulated in different ways throughout "*Love Me or Die*" and are most prevalently explored in his mottled skins of black and silver patterning and highly polished

Black Goat vs. Aesthetic Crime and Identity Crime: Comic Book Series (detail), 2010, aluminum plate, caste aluminum, car paint, 10 x 100 m



“I use ornament in some of my work not because it means anything to the piece itself, but because it is hated in the art discourse; it is considered decadent, meaningless, without purpose. I...want to make waves, to deliberately bother the eye of the art world.”

surfaces in his installation and sculptural relief work. I discuss this relation of skin and ornament in his *Aesthetic Crime and Identity Crime* below. For now, I want to examine a couple of precursors in this critical relation in his work by looking briefly at the two triptychs *Melting Portrait* and *Identity for Fun* (not in the exhibition). In both of these large-scale works, the artist articulates his own multiple identities as a transnational artist living in the United States and Indonesia, as well as a husband to an American wife and father to two sons. *Melting Portrait* is a portrait of the artist and his family. Each panel depicts a head; the far right is a composite of the artist's two sons, the left and central depict a head with four eyes, each one an eye from each member of the family. This work consists of composite portraits, suggesting that not only is identity multiple and never complete but also relational. We are comprised of, by, and for others. On the surface of the work, the artist has included what from a distance seems an abstract patterning of dots, again harkening to the artist's deliberate use of ornament as object in his work. Yet upon closer inspection, the small dots reveal photographs of the eyes of his family members. His use of the floating eye/'I' has been a common element to his work since at least 2000. Both the composite portrait and his use of the disembodied eye/I also connote ways in which he and his wife and sons have been perceived across and in different cultural contexts. For example, he often explores his experiences as an Indonesian Muslim male traveling and exposed to American stereotypes and representations in the media, as well as his wife's experiences and burden of enduring anti-American sentiment, particularly after the United States military invaded Iraq.

Melting Portrait not only presents the artist and family relationally in portrait, but also suggests the inaccuracies and contingencies of identity, of mutual misrecognition and the cruelty of scrutiny and the burden of being surveyed.

In this work too, the artist explores the critical use of ornament. In this case, he has painted what appears to be an organic form that winds its way from the base of his neck, stopping at the cleft of his chin. When asked about this form, Entang contended that he intended it as merely a decorative element, designed to 'bother the eye.' Yet, I think, given the influence of the *wayang* philosophy on his work, it is perhaps no coincidence or accident that ornament in this work takes the organic shape of what can be read as the symbolic tree of life in a style often seen in the *wayang*. In this regard, it marks the passage of time and plot. This may be taking the symbolism too far, but as a tree of life, it would also represent the roots of family, of ancestors, and one's connection to the past.

This brings the discussion to a work that while not included in "Love Me or Die" I think is important in understanding the artist's use and development of this notion of ornament as an object and strategic element in his later work. The work I have in mind is his *Identity for Fun*. Again, a triptych, this work is also a self-portrait, and contains many of what have become the artist's signature characters, figures and forms since at least his *Amuk* series. This includes his screaming floating head, symbolizing unrealized ideas and unstable psyche. In addition to representing the unrepresentable concept and madness, the artist has also included the figure of the wounded yet fecund female body, as well as other aspects of his social persona in the white masked figure who, with his right arm, seems to cling to *hati* or seat of human emotion. I have discussed such imagery and their social and cultural significance in my previous article (see Part I above). What strikes me about the present work is the artist's self-portrait and autobiographical imagery in which he again depicts himself as a composite of different and simultaneous identities. In this case, he has inscribed onto his visage the words 'identity for fun'. It would seem, if his portrait's seemingly maniacal smile

“If the Super Hero is a socially endorsed virtuous subject and one set up by Entang as a metaphor of power structures..., Black Goat is the socially stigmatized subject who engages and challenges social categories....”

were any indication, that identity can also drive a person mad or presents such a false mask that it defies belief.

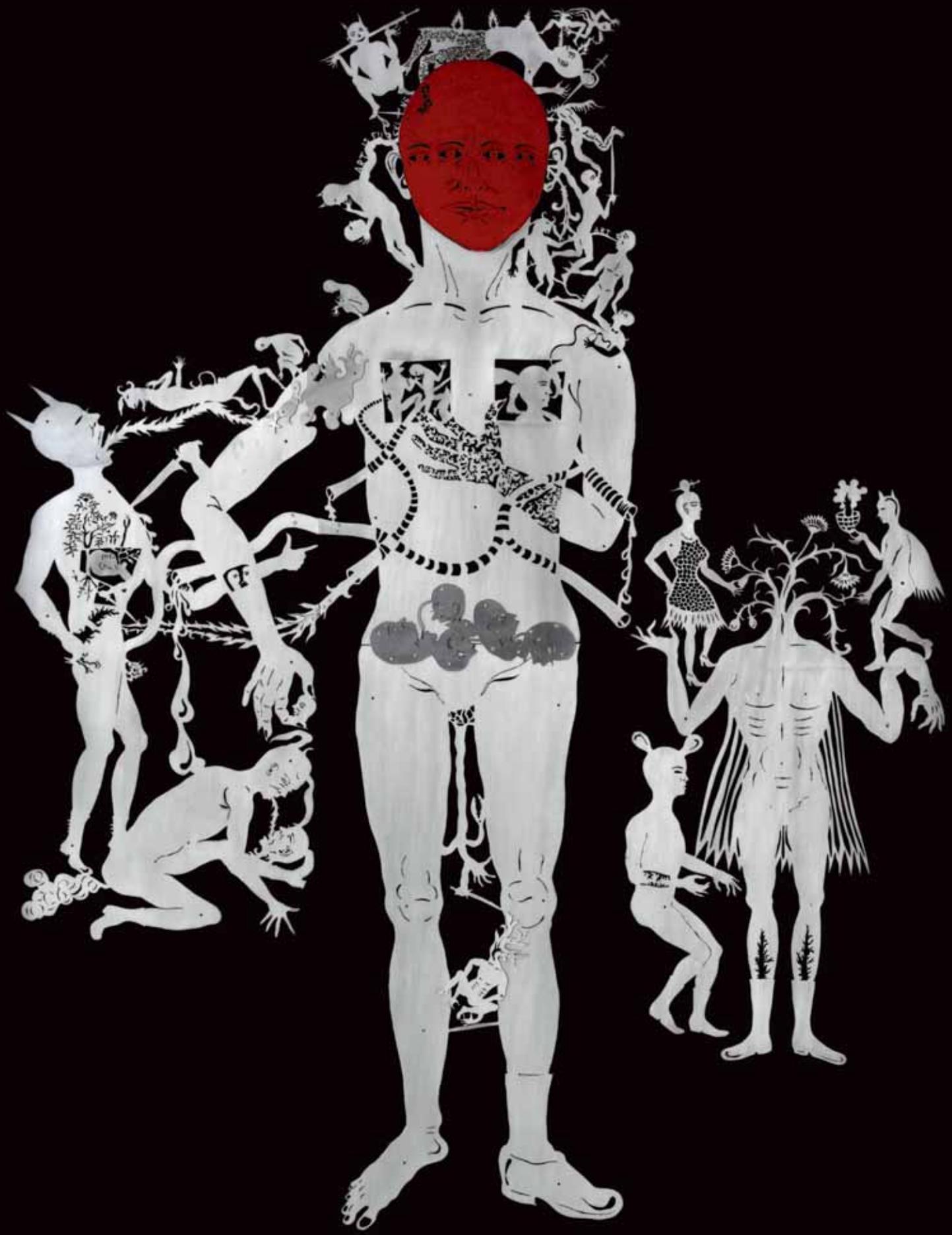
In interview, Entang suggests that in this work and others in the series, he made a discovery in unwittingly misspelling the word ‘identity’. It was in part the act of misspelling that initiated the artist to begin using text (English, Javanese and Indonesian) more frequently in his work. He found critical uses of the misspelled word that visualized what for him were positions and experiences of being “always not quite right, always incomplete, always partial.”

The imagery of *Identity for Fun* is brutal, and in certain passages, scatological. It pronounces a profound sense of uncertainty and loss. Yet, it is also shows a profuse use of ornament. Entang explained that ornament in this case serves to temper and soften the coarse nature of his figures. Ornament also functions as the ‘bloodline’ (as well as bowels and intestines) of this work, connecting the various figures and panels.

Inasmuch as the artist claims little significance to the forms that ornament takes, it cannot be denied that in several instances, they have significance and carry meaning in Javanese culture. In certain passages, for instance, the decorative patterning of Hendra Gunawan is discernible. Hendra was known for embellishing his scenes of banal human activity with brightly colored wisps of foliage often taken from Javanese Hindu-Buddhist symbolism. In his work, figures often seem to merge with their surroundings. In *Identity for Fun*, ornament threatens to take over, to exacerbate sensations of chaos rather than fulfill its function of temperance and balance. The artist’s use of color intensifies this aspect of ornament. As in *Melting Portrait*, Entang uses airbrushed neon pinks and yellows for a strategic purpose, one that again taps into discussions of art in Indonesia at the time. On

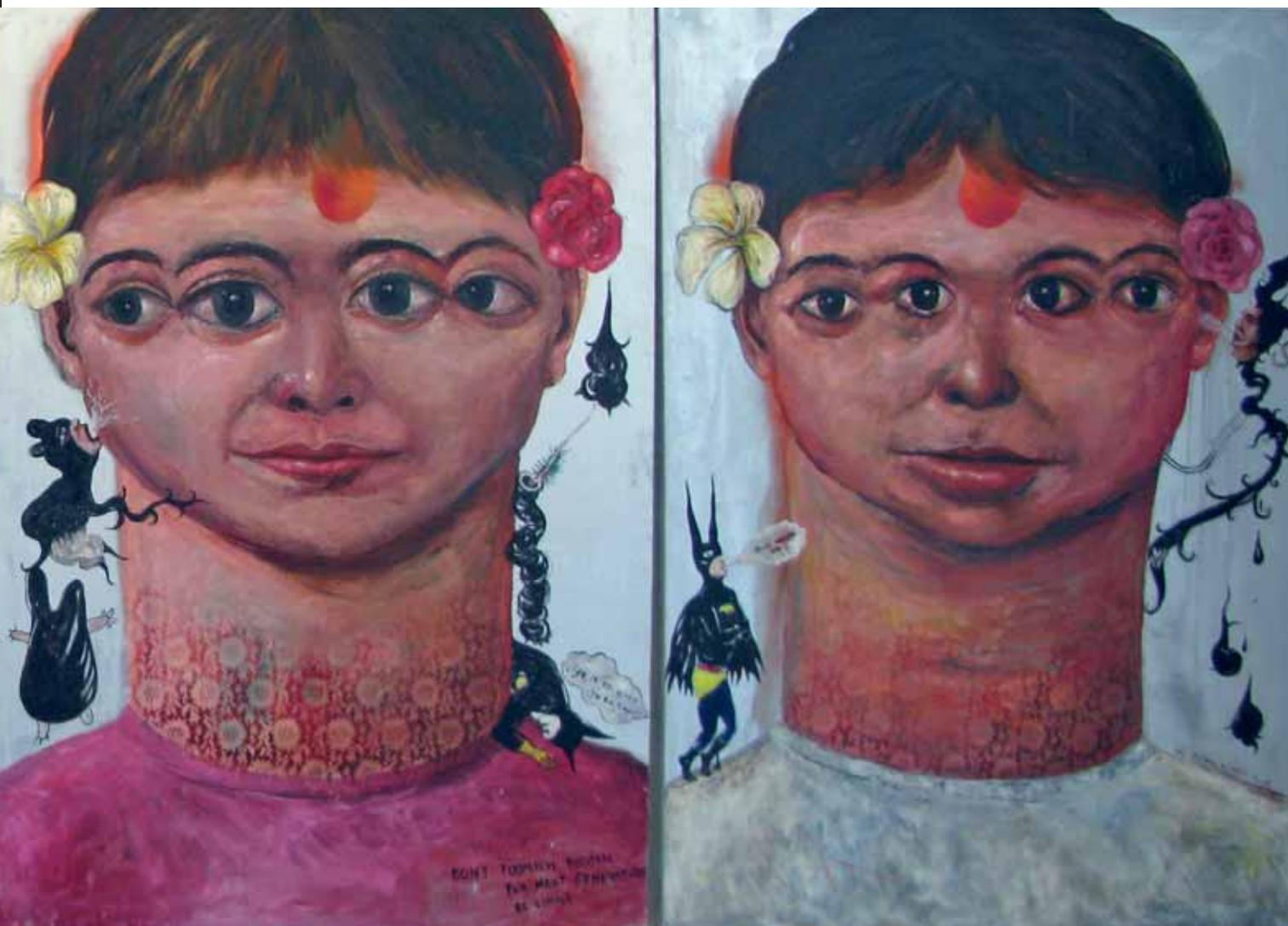
the one hand, he uses neon colors to break away from dominant assumptions of what made a good painting, what were considered appropriate colors for a mature work of art. Yet it was also his response to the many bright eye-catching works that have flooded the art market in past years.

Entang is not alone when he expresses concern over the rapid explosion in the international attention in contemporary art in post-Suharto Indonesia. Over the last decade, the explosion in the art market (including those who participate therein as critics, artists, students, curators, researchers, collectors, etc.) has been more than remarkable and has influenced not only the types of works made but also discussions of art and artistic practice. Many have pointed to the decline in deeper discussions of artistic practice in favor of an emphasis on art’s management in the Indonesian discourse. This of course has its merits and is a useful shift in that many have called for the need for further professionalism in the various roles played in the art world and market. However, questions of artistic practice, and depth of feeling for many, including Entang, were in danger of being submerged under this turning tide. In this regard, Entang considered his position in the art world in Indonesia as that of an outsider. He fashioned a kind of persona for himself that he calls Black Goat, an identity that is both black sheep and scapegoat, and speaks in critical terms of the issues delineated above. It should be underscored here that in many respects, this supposed outsider stance remains deliberately ironic as Entang is today one of the most sought after artists whose critical stance toward the art market (including the institutions of art) has proven quite the boon to his career. On the one hand, his work demonstrates a kind of self-mockery, his acknowledgement of his own place and complicity in the very system that he criticizes. On the other hand, his work is also an attempt on his part to continuously





Melting Family Portrait, 2008, spray paint, acrylic, oil on canvas, 172.7 x 284.5 cm



Melting Portrait... suggests the inaccuracies and contingencies of identity, of mutual misrecognition and...the burden of being surveyed.

In these works, the shadow, reflective surface, and light become art materials. Some might see a genetic affiliation with the *wayang kulit* as a precedent in the artist's use of the silhouette and shadow.

struggle to claim some kind of critical marginality in order to make those deeper connections and to think change differently.

Above, I connected Entang's concerns and interpretations of the complex issues of identity and the ways in which others give name and representation to the person and personhood, the foreign, and the artist as player in the game of the art market, with the artist's employment of texture, pattern, surface, or more abstract, yet even so precise, SKIN. Skin or the surface of the very medium within which he works takes on symbolic, allegorical meaning, and acts as a kind of syntax lending a crucial aspect of criticality to the overall presentation.

Around 2007, Entang began experimenting with the silhouette in relatively small embossed and aluminum-cut prints on paper, and a narrative series of cut aluminum and cast aluminum wall sculptures or reliefs. The cut out form, or silhouette, presented new challenges and another dimension, in the artist's vocabulary of skin/ ornament and his syntax of surface, as well as presents another building block in constructing a narrative of skin/ornament in Entang's work in "Love Me or Die".

In these works, the shadow, reflective surface, and light become art materials. Some might see a genetic affiliation with the *wayang kulit* as a precedent in the artist's use of the silhouette and shadow. The wayang puppet is typically intricately carved so that the attributes of a puppet are recognizable from both sides. When viewed from the shadow side of the screen, shadow and light replace ornately painted decoration that can be seen only from the other side of the screen, the side of the *dalang* (puppet master). It cannot be denied that traditions

such as the *wayang* are genetically and philosophically present in Entang's silhouettes and the way he views the usefulness of shadow and flatness. This is perhaps true particularly in the duality and simultaneity of shadow and light, presence and absence, seen and unseen that are essential to Javanese aesthetic and spiritual thought. Yet, his work cannot be reduced to this anymore than it can be to the flat aesthetic and format of the cartoon and comic strip, which play a role in his use of flatness and surface. Entang has created a new structure in his work that cannot be explained or associated so easily.

In fact, in conversation, the artist has suggested that he was dissatisfied with his first experiments with the cut-out and its flatness because they were too much like *wayang* puppets in appearance and form.

Black Goat vs. Aesthetic Crime and Identity Crime is a series of sculptural reliefs of cast aluminum. The intended narrative is one that reads non-linearly but takes its inspiration from the comic book aesthetic and figure of the Super Hero. In discussing the similar work, *The Story of Super Hero and the Black Goat II*, curator Joanna Lee writes:²

[I]ndividually cut aluminum-reliefs are assembled as a wall installation of surrealistic, bestial figures engraved with texts and symbolic icons suggestive of the violent conflicts between social inscription and personal identity....A dialectical and antithetical relationship between the titular protagonists is clearly intended. If the Super Hero is a socially endorsed virtuous subject and one set up by Entang as a metaphor of power structures and social norms that confer social acceptance and partisanship, Black Goat is the socially stigmatized subject who engages and challenges social categories by active agency and personal empowerment.

² Joanna Lee, "Entang Wiharso: I Am Black Goat Black Goat." *Entang Wiharso: Black Goat is My Last Defense* (Providence: 5 Traverse Gallery, 2008), p.8.

It represents a series of frozen moments of lived chaos; people, experiences, and all relations are interconnected and impossible to grasp fully at any one moment or in any one person.

Lee's description and reading are quite useful for discussing *Black Goat vs. Aesthetic Crime and Identity Crime*, with certain differences.

It would seem that the Super Hero and Black Goat have collapsed into a giant central figure surrounded by a menagerie of other figures and miniature other selves. He has made himself into a sad stereotype, into an object of desire and the locus of limited yet potentially destructive power. Entang remarked once that he chose the Super Hero because in comic books they are powerful but their powers are always limited and in danger of being subverted by other external powers. The Super Hero seems largely as a dangerous yet impassive figure standing amidst chaos. Yet it too carries the marks of the stereotype, the skins imprinted onto individuals by the very norms and social structures Entang suggests this personal icon is supposed to represent.

Entang has discussed this work as a visualization of the violence that seethes beneath the surface of infatuation and obsessive love. It represents a series of frozen moments of lived chaos; people, experiences, and all relations are interconnected and impossible to grasp fully at any one moment or in any one person. The artist posits an endless cycle of love and loathing (the two being one and the same thing) that threatens to overwhelm or annihilate. The central male and female figures carry weapons of all kinds, ready to impale or have impaled the loved and desired body which they would possess with such ardor and desperation. As in many of his works, the penis takes on absurd proportions, growing and expanding like an out of control creeping vine, maiming as a flaming thistle, a barbed tongue, a dagger or *kris*. The penis is not an instrument of pleasure but rather is abhorrent and grotesque, desire unchecked, the unconscious, unrestrained libido, and a symbol of sexual violence. Yet, it also suggests a kind of political and social impotence.

Paint in Entang's work has a sensuous quality and often, through his thick layers of medium and deep gashes cut into its surface like a knife into flesh, the dripping excess, the watery lines, and the oozing fluids construct images that both repel and compel, suggesting surfaces and skins (identities) that have been brutalized and made wretched. The means by which to express or visually represent such abject states and 'states of being' had to be rethought for his aluminum pieces. For these, the line takes on new urgency and significance. The artist plays with contradictions of the curvilinear, organic line, with the hard edge of the metal and the straight edge of an instrument of violence. In addition to 'the living line' that the artist has identified and uses as a key formal device with symbolic meaning, the patterned and gleaming polished surfaces also make brutality, sado-masochism, obsessive love, fanaticism, self-delusion, intolerance, etc. seemingly attractive things, sparking a kind of voyeuristic, sadistic pleasure at looking upon scenes of violence and the body dismembered.

My narrative of skin/ornament in Entang's art work and practice culminates and ends with *Temple of Hope*. In a way, the work is a kind of allegory of the mind and memory, akin to Freud's conception of the 'mystic writing pad' (read generally and simplified here) on which images that have been drawn on the pad can be erased but they always leave behind some trace of inscription in the surface below. In the realm of consciousness, one perception follows another, each one fades away and is followed by another. Yet, underlying this chain is a layer that imprints or inscribes lasting memory traces in the unconscious. *Temple of Hope* is like such a chain, with the past returning to the surface as recorded memory, a string of non-linear associations, fleeting thoughts, ideas and moments of interaction.

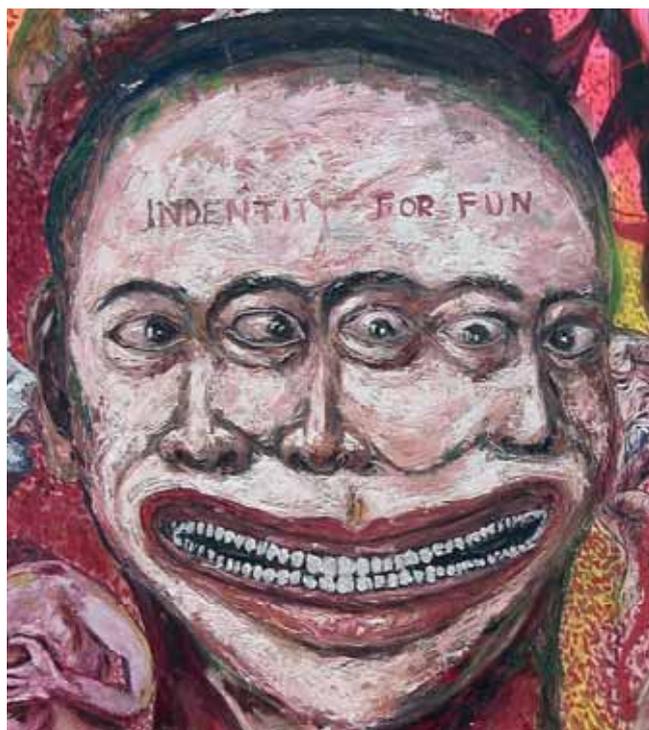
Entang's *Temple* is a visual and textual network of his interactions with his friends, neighbors and family. The



Identity for Fun, 2008, acrylic, gold leaf, ink, spray paint, oil on canvas, 250 x 450 cm



It was...the act of misspelling that initiated the artist to begin using text (English, Javanese and Indonesian) more frequently in his work. He found critical uses of the misspelled word that visualized what for him were positions and experiences of being “always not quite right, always incomplete, always partial.”



walls are replete with old Javanese sayings, snippets of conversation, utterances of personal hopes and dreams of friends and family, and those of the artist. Carved out of the roof is a theory of art criticism of a well-known faculty member of the art academy in Yogyakarta. These text images seem at times to randomly relate to the other figures on (in) the walls of the temple. The result is a seemingly inter-connected world, as if Entang's memories of past experiences and interactions have come flooding back all at once. They mingle, combine, distort, change, and morph as the viewer moves around the work.

If seen from the outside, the elaborately carved walls of the temple are illuminated from within, projecting image and text onto all other surrounding surfaces. As we read and move around the temple, it casts its shadow on our skin, thus repeating an act of inscription of sorts.

In this work, Entang combines the devices of reflection, and shadow and light in the *wayang* with the idea of relief sculpture that traditionally adorns the Hindu-Buddhist temples that dot the islands of Java and Bali. Reliefs are meant to be read as the devotee circumambulates around the exterior walls of the temple prior to entering the central chamber or sanctuary. In the case of Borobudur, the temple's stories are to be read from bottom to top as the initiate ascends the various levels of existence or states of being (from the most profane to the most sacred, from the realm of human existence and reincarnation to nirvana). In many cases, symbolic cloth patterns have been carved in shallow relief onto outer and inner walls of temple and sanctuary, suggesting a symbolic protective membrane, as well as a kind of barrier that must be crossed in order to gain the next level in a person's spiritual journey.

Entang invites his audience to enter *Temple of Hope*. And like the initiate to other temples, we have to work in order to 'get inside' his head or head of memories. The initiate to *Temple of Hope* must 'go underground,' crawl underneath the structure. Once inside, the eye is dazzled by the numerous lights of a decorative hanging light hung from the center beam. The glitz of the crystal chandelier and its many points of light add a degree of ornamental decadence to the interior scene. From the outside, the internal lamp remains barely visible but its effects are quite apparent. In a certain sense, gaining entry is like being let in on the punch-line to a joke, in this case one poking fun at what is often feigned seriousness and lack of transparency in the art world.

I opened my discussion by framing Entang Wiharso's work in terms of how he attempts to visualize the basic human desire for recognition, and the result of conferring recognition and the withholding of it. In the artist's work, both have been articulated as sites of power by which people are differentially formed. In "*Love Me or*

Die", he often points to how certain people are recognized as *less than*, as incomplete, as incorrect, and how some are not recognized at all, hence socially (and otherwise) defaced and erased. Entang, though expressing and responding to the basic desire for recognition and the pain of its conferral and withholding, he also demonstrates or at least hints at the advantages of being *less than* 'recognizable' to prevailing, painful social expectations and norms. Estrangement is sometimes preferable to gaining legibility via a set of norms in a 'system' that can hurt and erase.

Entang's work, which articulates pathology or pathologies in society and societies, speaks more to the senses or sentiment over and against the intellect in the ways he creates what I see as structures of estrangement. He asks or invites us, or even slyly directs us, to confront the uncanny, the abhorrent, and the painful. We might laugh out of anxiety more than jubilation from the punch line. To have a fear of the way we live life over our fear of death is what Entang asks of us.

His work demonstrates a kind of self-mockery, his acknowledgement of his own place and complicity in the very system that he criticizes. On the other hand, his work is also an attempt on his part to continuously struggle to claim some kind of critical marginality in order to make those deeper connections and to think change differently.



Above: *Twin Brother*, 2009, aluminum, 100 x 200 cm

Opposite: *Coalition - Why Are You So Hard to Love?*, 2009, aluminum plate, 200 x 100 cm

Following spread: Installation view *Love Me or Die* with *Fractal Skin* (2010) and *Narrow* (2010), Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2010









Above: *Melt*, 2008, acrylic, spray paint, car paint, collaged photo details, oil on canvas, 300 x 600 cm (triptych)
Following spread: *Black Goat vs. Aesthetic Crime and Identity Crime: Comic Book Series*, 2010, aluminum plate, caste aluminum, car paint, dimensions variable









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every religion. It
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Previous and following spread: *Temple of Hope: Forest of Eyes* at the Singapore Art Museum (SAM), 2011, stainless steel frame, aluminum, resin, light bulbs, cable, lava stone, 350 x 300 x 400 cm (Exhibition view of *Panorama*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore)
Above: *Temple of Hope* (detail), 2010, steel frame, aluminum, resin, light bulbs, cable, lava stone, 350 x 300 x 200 cm

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Upside Down Landscape: In-Out Black Goat, 2008, charcoal powder, acrylic, pencil, spray paint, oil on canvas, 250 x 450 cm





My Life as a Robot, 2009, charcoal, acrylic, spray paint, oil on canvas, 300 x 600 (triptych)



Signs in Entang Wiharso's Work

First published in the book "*Love Me or Die*" (Jakarta: Galeri Canna, 2010)

An artwork can be taken as a set of ideas and feelings worked on and translated by the artist into a specific concrete form. The set comes to us as a visual construction that 'hides' a great number of component pieces. These component pieces may have something to do with political ideology, social and economic gaps, cultural dynamics, discontent, anger, dismay, dislike, passionate love, prayer, or just 'playfulness' with visual language. Viewing an artwork is facing and entering a challenging, stimulating interpretive atmosphere. Viewing an artwork is encountering a number of 'codes' that can be covert or overt. Forms in an artwork may directly represent the artist's intended meanings but they may also be meant to convey the reverse.

As a set of component pieces with its own significance, an artwork doesn't necessarily stand by itself. It is connected with numerous extrinsic elements, factors and intentions in their totality or fragmentation. Accordingly, the artist incorporates them, in their relative wholeness or fragmentation, consciously or otherwise, into a given work. As a result, an artwork keeps or conceals some narrative—long or brief, verbal or disguised—which the artist wishes to communicate to the public.

Regarding the intention to communicate, some artists take the straightforward way in 'voicing' their ideas. Some others adopt the covert, disguised, symbolic and metaphoric way. That is how an artwork is; it is full of signs and codes that invite us to interpret them. Artists deliberately arrange and compose the various component forms and the whole visual work as 'codes' or 'icons' that are meant to convey messages to the public. Hence the public comes face-to-face with 'enclosed' meanings, disguised signification, or meanings of connotative as well as denotative codes. Artworks tend to offer ambiguous codes that provoke multiple interpretations and in turn

invite other disciplines to enrich our perspectives in the reception and interpretation of the works.

The elements of an artwork are not necessarily immediately identifiable. Questions will soon come up, for instance: what do those forms serve; do they serve as symbols or signs? The failure to differentiate the two can lead to misapprehension. "...A symbol is a cultural expression that always contains ambivalence" says Ignas Kleden (2004, 11). Ignas Kleden further explains, "Basically a symbol is different from a sign. Because a sign has the function of stating while a symbol has the double functions of stating and at the same time concealing something. In an extreme form a symbol can state something by concealing it, and can conceal something by just stating it" (212). In other words it is highly possible for a certain form in a given work to merely function as a sign (stating something) while in another work the same form functions as a symbol (moving between stating and concealing).

The differential tendency between sign and symbol is not always fully realized during the creation of artworks. This is because artists are not always consistent with respect to 'form' and 'function'. In different instances a certain form may be the same or have a different function subject to the ideas and context of the work it belongs to. In this respect Susanne K. Langer's observation about the 'meaning' and 'message' of a symbol is relevant. She maintains, more or less, that a symbol in art is whole and therefore it doesn't convey 'meaning' to be understood but 'import' to 'be absorbed'. Regarding 'meaning' we can only understand or fail to do so; while with respect to the 'message' or 'import' of artworks, we can be lightly or intensely touched. There is a wide range of elasticity concerning the absorbing of the 'import' of artworks (M. Sastrapratedja, 1983, 77). The complexity of surrounding issues as well as



ever-evolving events and experiences drive an artist (who thinks much, is unsettled and critical) to keep searching and making forms deemed most representative of his/her feelings and ideas, and most importantly, to create distinctive or unique works. At this point I'd like to quote Kleden (2004) again: "...To be born, to love, to suffer, and to die are constant issues in the life of the individual and society. What can be interesting is the attitude and response taken by an individual in facing them, and facing them in a specific way. Love is something universal yet every love is unique at the same time" (67). The statement can provide a stepping-stone to understanding the variety of languages of (visual) expression that spring from nearly identical themes or ideologies. In this regard, discussion can be expanded in connection with the issues of originality, novelty or creativity, which keep developing and acquiring new contexts.

The question then is how do artists generate signs that are not always easily interpretable? To begin with, it

should be understood that artists in general tend to distance themselves from—or even persistently ignore—verbal systems/language in expressing things. On the contrary they try hard to find or invent 'signs' and work them in order to result in symbolic forms that involve distinctive or unique metaphors. Ignas Kleden elaborates the point clearly and interestingly by comparing scientific and literary knowledge. "In science, concepts are built by eliminating connotations and ambivalence to the highest possible extent so as to achieve denotations with definable contents and limits. By contrast, in literary works connotations are possible and ambivalence is activated to animate the symbolic nature of literature by employing symbolization techniques like metaphor, allegory, and others." (8) Artists also work that way when they make and present forms that appear as sets of symbols, codes and signs.

In reading an artwork, a problem comes up when we are faced with a number of signs that are very much open, and have the potency to expand, more than the



artist ever imagined. So it often happens (and remarks are often heard) that the reading and interpretation of an artwork goes beyond the visible and the (supposed) intention of the artist. But it is only common as far as the field of interpretation is concerned. References, opinions and articulations are very likely to widen or deepen. That's why there will never be a reading of an artwork that is able to bring forth an exhaustive, single, let alone absolute, meaning of the work in question. A reading only leads to a portion of meaning that will evoke other layers of meaning.

Entang Wiharso is an artist intensely involved in creating paintings, three-dimensional work and installations and is constantly exploring various possible materials, visual renderings and forms. Some of his visual images and forms tend to be recurrent in works made in different places and at different times. Overall, Entang Wiharso's works are marked by contrast in the visual composition; distorted forms or figures; a tendency toward deformation (a body with legs and arms that are either too short or

too long, or with the head too big); faces with strained expressions, widely grinning mouths; faces with multiple eyes (three or even four lined up horizontally); and umbilical cords creeping everywhere. Then there are the saws and knives; the self-portraits and family portraits (of his wife and sons); images of the highway and panoramic landscapes; the use of cut-aluminum; as well as the newest 'code' he has been using in the form of the black goat.

Entang Wiharso is the type of artist who likes to explore and has an abundance of fertile, critical ideas. His life and living are filled up with dramatic experiences and clashes that have conditioned him to fight domination, hegemony, intimidation, arbitrariness, one-sided interpretation and judgments based on non-communication (anti-dialogue). His critical attitude and thinking were forged by such conditions. Therefore Entang's works actually represent the artist's continual attempts to uphold and reflect values, ethics and morality. What he creates and presents are in the first place made to 'remind himself' and only

...There is almost always misunderstanding in the audience's reception of his work. While such misunderstanding is common...it will be interesting to examine further why it happens, and what message he...actually wants to convey...

then are they offered to a broader public. The main issue is focused on considering and questioning morality. He has the keen intention to spread (transmit) sensibility through the medium of artwork to convey views and concerns, including worries about political matters, identity, and social and cultural issues by means of the 'visual dramas' that he composes. I use the phrase 'visual dramas' because Entang's works most often contain profoundly dramatic images.

Yet, as previously stated, when it comes to 'reading and interpreting' there is always some distance between [artists] and their works and the public. Regarding Entang Wiharso's works in particular, there is almost always misunderstanding in the audience's reception. For example, when viewing a number of Entang's works some will remark that his art is "eerie, chilling or frightening and has an atmosphere of violence, tragedy and horror." While such misunderstanding is common (with respect to works by any artist), it will be interesting to examine further why it happens, and what message (import) that the artist—Entang in this case, and according to him—actually wants to convey behind the misunderstood forms that tend to be strange, complex and provocative.

On "Distorted Figures"

In the previous section, a few details of the iconographic aspects, or at least the visual phenomena, in Entang's work were discussed. In fact, Entang wants to speak about the values of 'ugliness' and 'beauty' through his work. These two terms can become interchangeable as a result of relative values and perceptions. Each can serve as a 'doorway' to understanding the other, since understanding either gives a sense of the other. If there is only an awareness of what is good and normal, the possibility of misunderstanding something that is different, defective or incomplete is increased. By featuring abnormality, or images that lack proportion, in his work,

Entang actually means to create a statement that speaks about concealed 'genetics.' These images in his work allude to ironic or paradoxical facts of injustice, corruption, arbitrariness, greed, and the like. He has often encountered such phenomena, both while staying or living in Indonesia and America. Ultimately identity issues and stigma develop; stereotyped views are used to justify putting someone (including Entang) into a box in order to frame, categorize or label them. Such conditions drive Entang Wiharso to develop his ideas from alternative perspectives, resulting in the distortional tendency prevailing in his works. Shaping and constructing distorted forms is a way for him to express his disapproval of stereotyped stigmas in addition to reflecting on his own experiences.

Individuals, groups, communities or societies everywhere can easily hold unjust opinions. Based on conjecture, they result from superficial observations, glimpses, and ignorance of detailed social structure. This may result in a sloppy conclusion that values are uniform across lives and cultures. Entang is troubled by such situations and therefore his work can be seen as a form of affirmation that these situations exist as well as a protest against these kinds of views.

Why do distorted figures always recur in his works? According to Entang, repetition is indispensable. "Repetition is an effective way to aggressively promote ideas. Repetition is a means to provoke people visually and mentally and get the maximum impact from the statements and ideas I convey through my work," he says. Avoiding permanent stereotypes implies the daring to move beyond safe zones. This reflects more of a mental stance; some artists feel most comfortable using certain consistent forms and others prefer to continue altering or modifying the forms in their work. The decision to adopt a fluid way in creating, regarding both the style and medium, clearly shows Entang's



Borderless: Floating Island, 2011-2012, graphite, resin, brass, steel, pigment, thread, 350 x 750 x 140 cm



Left to right:
Over Power (detail), 2009, aluminum plate, 200 x 100 cm
Narrow (detail), 2010, resin, car paint, thread, polyurethane, 5 pieces – each 100 cm diameter
Me as Teddy Bear (detail), 2004, oil, acrylic on canvas, steel plate, resin, 300 x 600 cm (triptych)
Holy Dream in the Second Homeland, 2013, brass, resin, color pigment, thread
Melting Portrait (detail), 2008, acrylic, spray paint, oil on canvas, 172.7 x 213.5 cm
Tanpa Narasi (detail), 2007, acrylic, oil canvas, 200 x 150 cm

A tool, like a saw or knife, can be dangerous if used by the wrong person.

Multiple sets of eyes allude to the attempt at improving shrewdness in dealing with the complexity of one's experience of life.

anti-establishment stance. "I'm scared to be trapped in a conventional and complacent way of working and thinking because, in my opinion, once an artist succumbs to this, the work becomes mechanical and they get stuck using self-prescribed formulas. If this happens, without realizing it an artist may end up creating work to merely satisfy art scene trends," Entang explains.

Entang's work keeps moving and evolving; he is always exploring different media, fleshing out ideas, adopting various perspectives in dealing with subject matters, and employing a certain playfulness in dealing with intimate body parts, unfixed proportions, dramatic atmosphere, and surprising ornamentation. See, for example, how he uses continually distorted forms, how he works ornamental elements and renders them in striking colors, creating contrasts that sting the eyes, and so on.

Sensuality: Latent Alliance

Entang's exploration often leads him to the rendering of human's (and animal's) intimate organs in various forms. They can take the form of an elongated phallus, branching here and there, and winding like intestines. Considering his idioms, we can presume that he means to convey the issue of desire and self-control.

Libido is closely connected with power. The practice of violence often reflects that of power. "Sensuality in my work," Entang says "is a metaphor for the alliance between mankind and violence, as it has occurred and is continually produced. It is a latent alliance; one which is underground, secret and hidden and which can manifest anytime, anywhere with destructive results. Humans internalize violence in such a way that gradually violence can give psychic and physical pleasure, pleasure for the body and soul," he adds. This statement is a great help for us in our attempt to understand his language of expression—those invented forms, sensational, even wild distortions—in association with sensuality.

Regarding "Saw, Knife, Pistol, Sword, Grinning Face, Multiple Eyes" etc.

Obvious in Entang's artworks are objects such as the saw, or knife, which are rendered almost without distortion or ornamentation. Such forms are 'verbally' there, easily recognizable as useful, everyday tools. Compare them with other forms or figures that tend to be presented in distorted ways. This comparison begs the question of why, when portraying these objects (the saw, knife, grinning face, etc.), Entang creates them virtually distortion-free?

Those forms must be so significant for Entang that he doesn't want to disguise their presence in the pictorial space. He apparently wants to speak about how important the appropriate use of a tool is by the right person. "A tool, like a saw or knife, can be dangerous if used by the wrong person," he remarks. But why the saw? Because the saw or knife has immediate psychological effects on people in association with its sharpness, scariness, and potential menace for anyone.

The most frequently present image in Entang's work is the 'grinning face.' Grinning faces in his works may sometimes remind us of works by Edvard Munch (1863-1944), particularly his monumental *The Scream* (1893) now belonging to the collection of The National Gallery, Oslo. The painting shows someone on a bridge screaming, the eyes popping, while two eerie figures are behind him. The sky, rendered in strong brush strokes, still retains some of its reddishness. The piece is really disturbing and the title suits it well, screaming with fright. Adopting icons similar to those introduced by Munch—the grinning face among other images—is Entang's way to 'explode emotions.'

For Entang himself the grinning face represents acceptance of either pleasures or pains, or both all at once. For him it is a way to allude to the reality of

“Sensuality in my work is a metaphor for the alliance between mankind and violence....”

human beings who often have to experience pains and pleasures simultaneously. An obvious example is the case in which under dictatorship the people go through repression yet still enjoy physical pleasures. The wish to be free from oppression is suppressed by pleasures even though they are only mechanical and phantasmagoric in nature. Humans, consciously or not, often live their lives in multiple or multi-layered spaces and settings. In Javanese culture, for instance, a person's social interaction often involves avoidance of straightforwardness in speaking, simply to play it safe.

Entang's life experiences, including the experience of raising his two children in both Indonesian and American culture, have given him an issue to be concerned about. This issue he has been reflecting on is 'identity.' This concerns, at a minimum, the issue of what 'identity' his children will have or bear resulting from the (cultural) values they are growing up with. "I've been worrying about their growth, and trying to keep them from being 'co-opted' by just one of the two cultures, whether Indonesian or American," he admits. At this point, he regards the eyes as having a central role in making contacts and absorbing values. "What we see becomes our pre-statement," he says. What he means is that our eyes show us our starting point to take us to further issues, social and spiritual experiences. By nature, the eyes search, follow movements, and in turn they drive one's body and mind to keep moving. That is the background idea of the 'multiple sets of eyes' on one single face that we often see in his work.

The multiple sets of eyes in Entang's art can therefore be read as messages about worries, anxieties, but also alertness to 'the experience of seeing'; they deal with the questions of what is seen, what to see and not to see, how to see, and how to absorb and treat the values implied by the seen. The multiple sets of eyes allude to

the attempt at improving shrewdness in dealing with the complexity of one's experience of life.

Regarding "Black Goat": Arbitrariness & Fragility

Entang Wiharso's works since 2008 tend to be 'quiet,' simple in visual composition, and almost without ornamentation. But visual surprises have been maintained. He can suddenly produce a work rich with ornamentation and striking colors that may even shock our sight. It feels like he's been working on and exploring some different essence. Such ornamentation and aggressive colors (he calls them 'neon colors') are intended to sting and provoke, while expressing resistance to the mainstream aesthetics of the art world. "In the current moment when people adore aesthetics that are visually pleasing and minimalist, or that are cool and calm, I like to choose colors that disturb the eye, especially garish ones, like neon pink, green, yellow, and the like," Entang says. In his opinion, images with neon colors and ornamentation are the best ways to counter the images made to suit the 'contemporary art paradigm' in Indonesia that has been moving toward homogenized patterns and models. This approach is interesting in consideration of the history of how ornamentation tends to be marginalized in modern art. Ornamentation was once even seen as a 'crime' in art, lacking essential form and function. Entang 'borrows' such facts to position himself in a different, alternative sphere, while withdrawing from the mainstream.

Situating himself as the 'main figure' in the center of issues has been characteristic of his work for some time. Work created under the 'Black Goat' theme, for example, places him as the title character - the 'scapegoat' that is often seen as the 'trouble-maker' or the source of the 'problem', and who must therefore be interrogated or marginalized. In daily life he fights such treatment. In response he has created a visual construction: the large,



dominant figure of the 'black goat' enduring and engaging the far smaller 'super hero' (resembling Batman or Superman). Such scenes and compositions seem ironic, even tragic, and at times are accompanied by satirical humor.

The 'Black Goat' theme has a visual lexicon which includes the image of a highway. These compositions are powerful and dramatic. On a busy highway we always find dividing lines—solid and broken ones—that can serve to represent personal and social domains of life. In real life such borderlines can be futile when arbitrariness reigns and a person or people easily break

the rules of the game. Individuals become fragile in life. The highway stands as an illustration of dramatic fragility. There, prejudice and suspicion may befall the weak or the fragile. A highway can indeed serve as a sharp indicator of the ways of a society. Entang effectively 'captures' this reality; with swift brushstrokes he applies those dividing lines—which are able to show the speed of highway traffic—and places a (black) goat, ironically and dramatically, traveling there on the highway.

As an idiom, 'black goat' (*kambing hitam* in Indonesian) has a negative connotation. In western culture, being the 'black sheep' is not always regarded as a bad thing;

“In the current moment when people adore aesthetics that are visually pleasing, ...I like to choose colors that disturb the eye....”

however, someone in this position retains the potential to be blamed and to have an unfavorable position, and remains susceptible to scapegoating. This clearly has something to do with the use of power and hegemony which occurs in almost all areas of human life. Entang's Black Goat seems to erupt from a long buried deposit from the time “when I was regarded as the *kambing hitam* by those with power,” Entang says. In this context, the forces of power are multidimensional and include the practices of a network of art galleries, writers and

critics. As a result, the Black Goat in his works alludes to the artist's resistance to such use of power.

On “Self-Portrait”

Themes which are infrequently explored by Entang in his work include self-portraits and family portraits. He does, however, create them on special occasions for his family members (his wife, his two children, and himself), especially on birthdays. Entang regards a birthday as an important moment in a person's life. Yet the self-portraits and family portraits he makes feel far from narcissistic.

Painting a self-portrait is, for Entang, an attempt to perform self-criticism concerning his presence amid the complexities of his personal and social life. Besides, by doing a self-portrait he feels he can know himself better. He says, “Criticizing yourself actually involves dealing with issues of a wider spectrum and range, erasing guilty feelings, and, most importantly, empowering yourself.” The statement is interesting and accurate. It apparently correlates with his strong and satirical attitude to proclaim himself the ‘black goat.’ He doesn't hide behind any morality; instead, he presents himself openly for others' critical observation. He presents himself both as a metaphor and as a reality as part of systemic situations and social networks.



Speaking about his 'family portrait' works, many of them are intended as statements rather than mere portraits. These works can be read as records of mental states, i.e., Entang's approach of trying to understand the family as his immediate milieu as well as the outlook of the individuals in his most immediate social environment regarding his existence. These works can be seen as reflecting the artist's viewpoint about the process of cultural mixing that often involves tensions, conflicts, expectations and dreams. In any event, those family members are the people whom he knows best and, reversely, who know him best. They are working together towards achieving a mutual understanding that

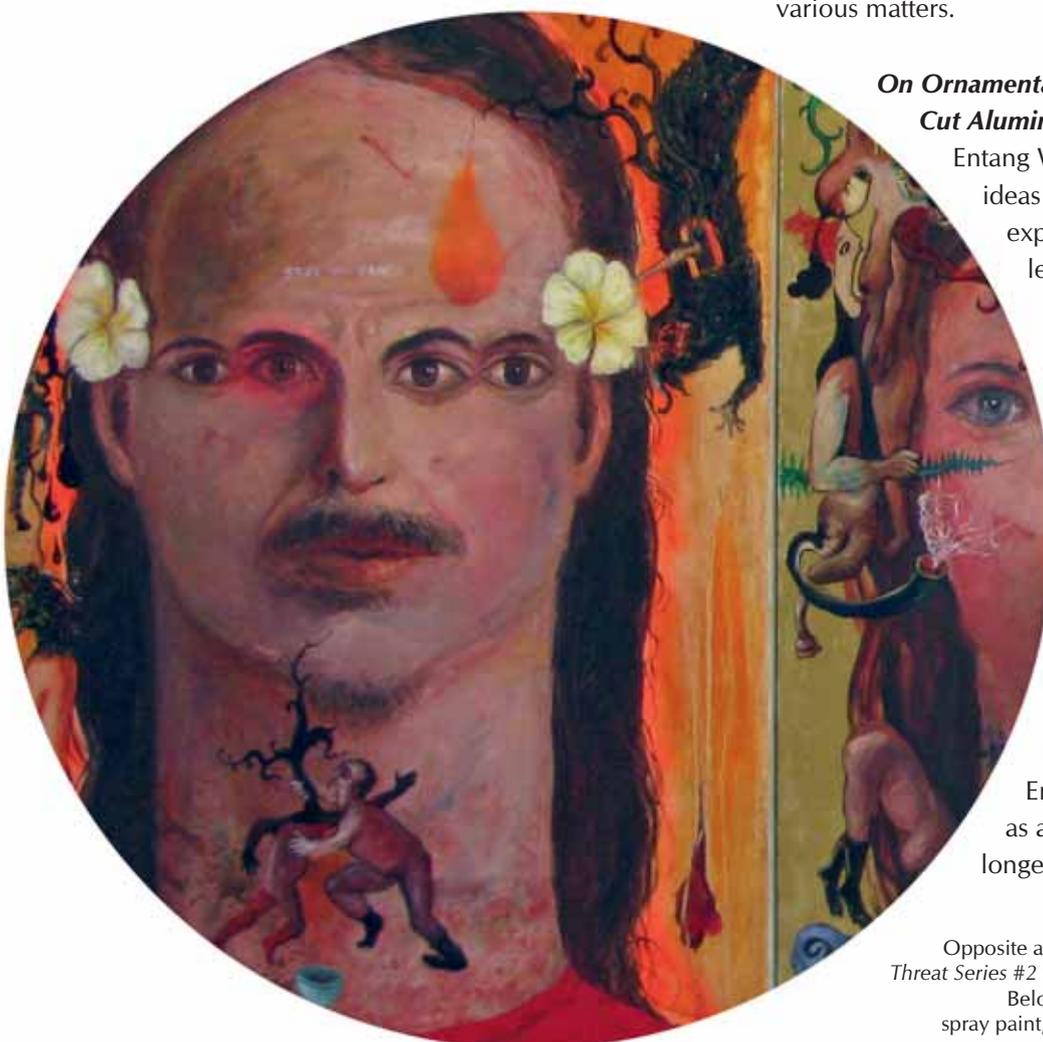


is not easy to accomplish, and on their way they encounter intercultural frictions and negotiations of various matters.

**On Ornamentation in
Cut Aluminum: Hidden Paradoxes**

Entang Wiharso is exploring not only ideas but also materials. And his exploration of materials has recently led to the use of aluminum. At first the artist created graphic works, in particular embossed prints, using aluminum cut into certain shapes peculiar-looking figures with ornamentation—which were then printed on paper. Of course, this was done without paints or colors since the effect he was after was an embossed effect.

In his current artistic pursuits, Entang uses aluminum again not as a printmaking technique, and no longer as the expected, cliché print,



Opposite and above: *I Love You too Much: Invisible Threat Series #2* (detail), 2012, oil on linen, 200 x 186 cm
Below: *Melting Family Portrait* (detail), 2008, spray paint, acrylic, oil on canvas, 172.7 x 284.5 cm



robustness, hardness, and sharpness while the ornamental compositions he creates appear to conquer the material's character. Entang's work presents paradoxes, symbolizing look-alike, false realities we encounter on a day-to-day basis which are full of disguises in which appearances belie meanings, behaviors or values contained within.

Through his use of metal, Entang Wiharso showcases his interesting abilities, especially as they relate to how he manages ideas of desire and inner space.

but as a medium that conveys (and hides) messages. Entang has created an assortment of odd figures, covered in ornamental shapes with a partly kinetic feel, which form 'wall installations.' These are, in fact, two dimensional works which he presents by arranging and assembling the aggregate parts into installations. They are not always mounted on the wall of a room. Entang presents them in different variations of space such as on the outside wall of a building, on interior walls, or even clinging to a 'fence.' The size of the works varies considerably but tends to be large-scale.

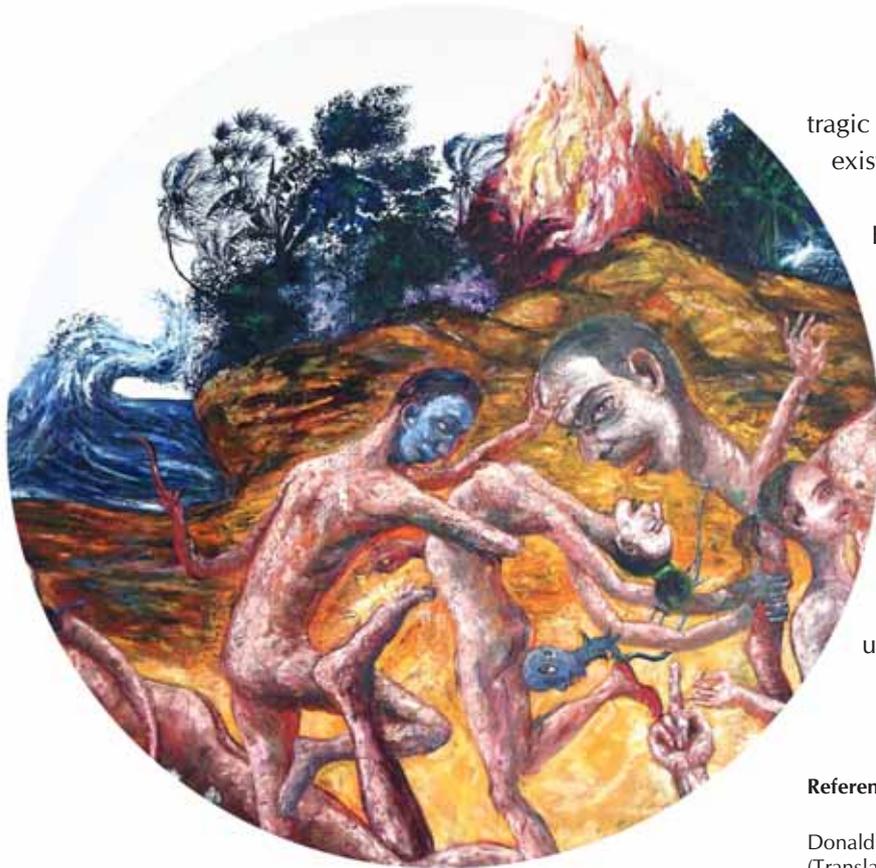
Entang's efforts to bring contrasting values into sharper focus reverberate through his use of aluminum. For instance, the strange forms or figures are created using complicated cutting and drilling techniques, which seem almost decorative, as the works are full of engraved detail. The aluminum metal he opts for indicates

On Panorama: Beautiful Tragedy

Entang's newest creative venture, in my opinion, is quite a surprise. Perhaps because I never imagined (also never expected) that Entang would take up the theme of panorama (or landscape) in his work, particularly his paintings. In fact, it is this very theme on which Entang is working very intensively at the moment.

Of course, Entang is not just presenting a panorama (let alone one of merely entertaining nature). Extending beyond that, his work evokes the feel of a stage; the panorama functions as a 'stage' that contains complexity. In presenting the work in this theme, he plays with the empty-full dichotomy to create striking contrast. The space of the painting is divided simply into two parts, 'sky' and 'earth.' The 'sky' is left empty, thus baring the color of the white canvas without any brush strokes at all, while the 'earth' is filled with pictures of trees, vegetation, hills, and the activities of their inhabitants. This way of painting is reminiscent of the stage setting

The aluminum metal he opts for indicates robustness, hardness, and sharpness while the ornamental compositions he creates appear to conquer the material's character.



of the Javanese dance called *wayang orang* or even of the screen of the shadow play with leather puppets called *wayang kulit*. In a Javanese dance, the stage serves as a marker of places and mood. In a shadow play, the screen functions as the 'stage' of life.

These works feel very honest, real and contextual with regard to today's reality. When everyone with authority (power) is busy playing the game and orchestrating the 'panorama' without thinking, then the landscape suffers. That panorama—of the earth or the universe—is continually there as if it were created solely for their own interest while those left to suffer the consequences of what they have done are simply ignored and forgotten. This is indeed greed at its worst. So panoramas in Entang Wiharso's works are actually capturing 'tragedy,' a truly

tragic story which has been with us as long as man has existed.

Here in Entang's work we find evidence that artworks are actually artifacts with a potency to 'keep and retrieve' mental, social, and cultural facts about the artists, which incite us to trace, read and interpret. So all the properties—the signs and symbols—that recur frequently and strikingly, in the pictorial space as well as mentally, also entice the sensitivity of viewers to inquire into, analyze, and discover the hidden meanings. That way, the entire practice of creating artworks and the study of them will end up attempting to enlighten others.

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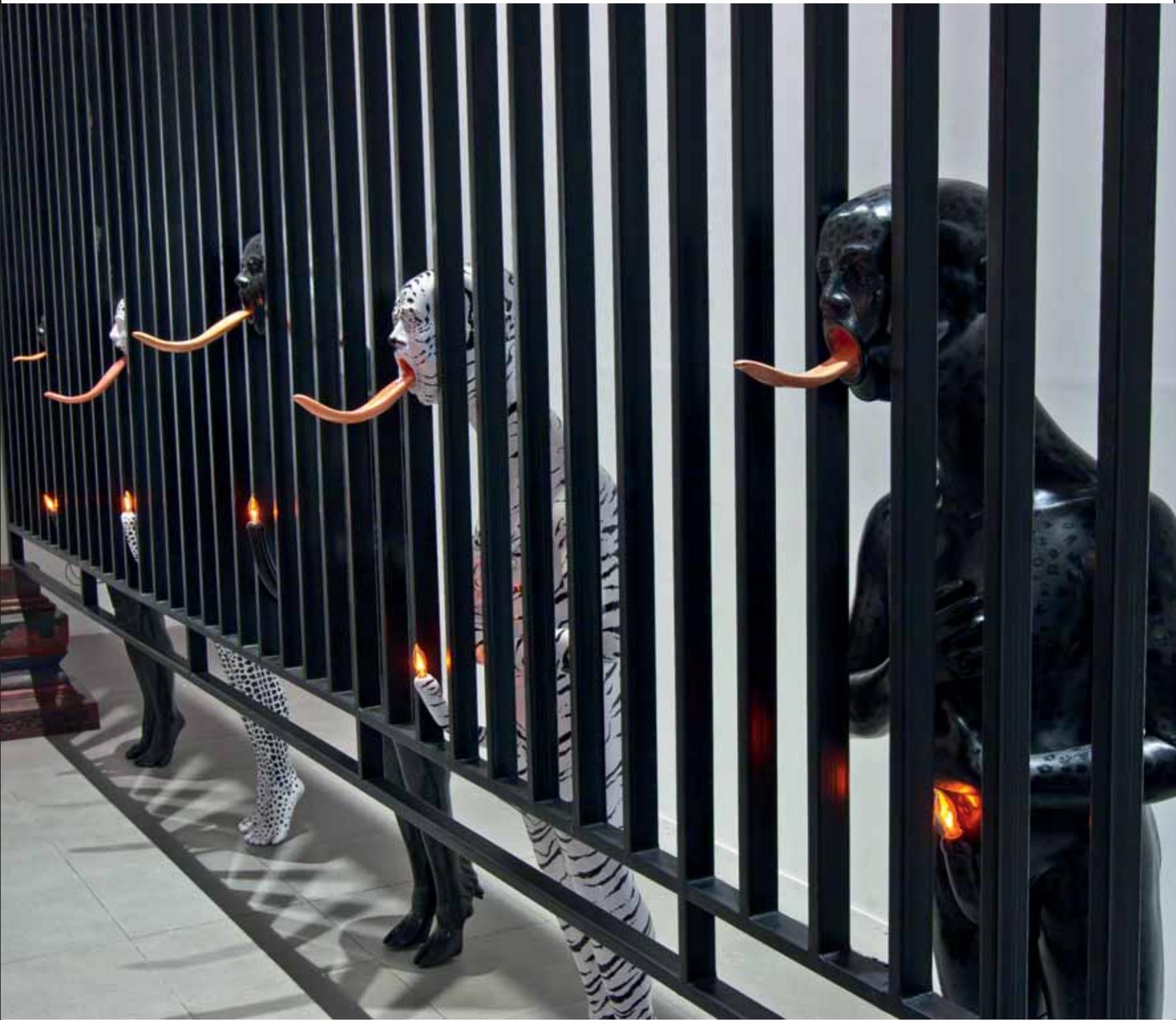
Ignas Kleden, 2004, *Sastra Indonesia dalam Enam Pertanyaan; Esai-esai Sastra dan Budaya*, Jakarta: Freedom Institute & PT Pustaka Utama Grafiti.

M. Sastrapratedja (Editor), 1983, *Manusia Multi Dimensional, Sebuah Renungan Filsafat*, Jakarta: PT Gramedia.

Marina Vaizey, 1993, *100 Famous Paintings*, London: Tiger Books International.



Above and opposite: *Chronic Satanic Privacy*, 2010, steel fence, wood, aluminum, resin, color pigment, light bulbs, electrical cables, 250 x 800 cm







Excerpts from:

Zuhud: Protecting the heart, surrendering the self to ecstasy

Jim Supangkat first garnered attention in the 1970s as a founder of the *Indonesia New Art Movement* which encouraged experimentation and a revitalization of socially committed art. From this pivotal start as an artist, and continuing in his work as an independent curator, Supangkat developed a finely tuned awareness of the political and social realities within artists' work. This sensitivity to socio-political content in Indonesian art has remained a key factor in his writing and curatorial projects. As a key figure engaged in defining the national art discourse, Supangkat was one of the first curators to analyze and champion Wiharso's work early in his career. His essay for "*Love Me or Die*" focuses on Wiharso's investigation of power in his work. Supangkat theorizes about the manifestation of power in religion and its potential impact on Wiharso's creative practice by exploring concepts of 'spirit' and 'spirituality,' religiosity, personal vs. institutional religion, and the role of perception in his painting and sculpture. He then examines three elements in Wiharso's oeuvre, namely the use of theatricality, the expression of multiple realities, and the excavation of Javanese culture. Following are excerpts from his essay "Zuhud: Protecting the heart, surrendering the self to ecstasy" published in the book "*Love Me or Die*" (Jakarta: Galeri Canna, 2010, pp. 27-49).



“Power is vested upon an individual, existing in society. Emerging alone or manifested through a group—either small or large. This kind of power is not always apparent, is not always in possession of form, does not always display power relations. The camouflaged desire for power may stay hidden.”

“It is almost as if he is posing the question: where is the root of this question about power? Does it reside in the socio-political system, or does it reside in the mentality of its society?...On a political stage, the desire for power is expected—don’t be a politician if you only have a pedestrian desire for power.”

“In his view, fanaticism has many forms. ...’Fanaticism tends to separate itself from society, it has a black and white way of viewing things, and facilitates the adoption of extreme opinions,’ Entang explained. Inwardly, within its own group, fanaticism ties up and denies freedom. Outwardly, fanaticism does not tolerate, compelled to make enemies and erase human relationships.”

“In understanding power, Entang does not merely inquire about the power relations within a social sphere which critiques the domination of a small, powerful minority upon a large number of people (the society). Power, in his expressions, fundamentally inquires about the power stemming from human desires. Such power inhabits a larger scope of inquiry within a society’s problems.”



“In the early days of his career in the 1990s, one of the factors affecting his choice to work with abstraction was...the Islamic tenet disallowing the depiction of human forms. Despite this, human figures appeared in his works....He also presented images of weapons—the *kris*, for example—to represent signs of power.”



Above (left to right):

The Fanatic (detail), 2010, car paint, propane gas tank, stove, wok, plate, resin, silverware, table, dimensions variable

Chronic Fanatic (detail), 2010, aluminum, caste rubber latex, steel bars, steel plate, 400 x 100 x 100 cm

Below: *Floating Island* (detail), 2010, acrylic, oil on linen, 300 x 500 cm



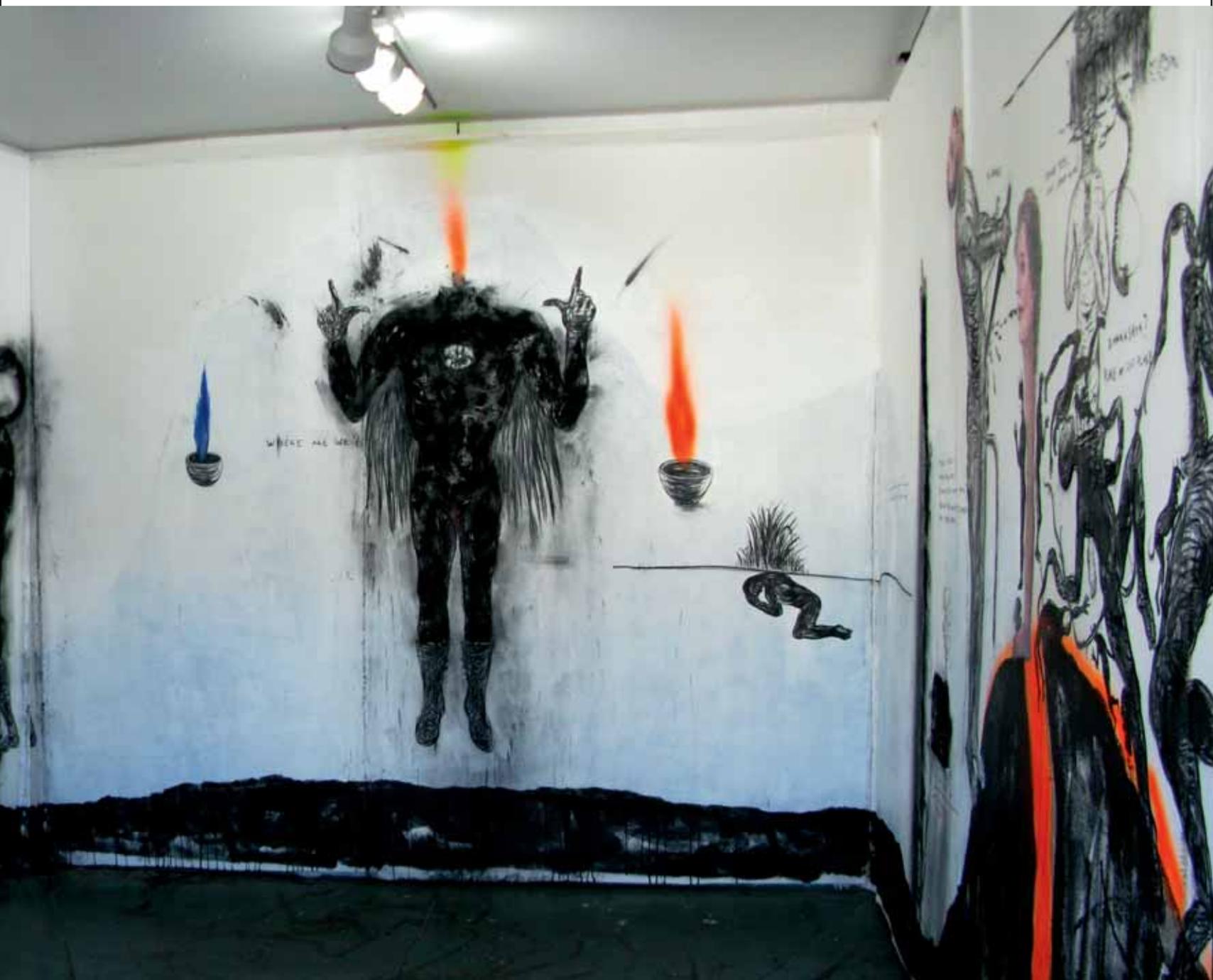
“This fence becomes a symbol of the mentality that separates one person from the other, like that found in religious fanaticism. The meaning of this fence cannot be separated from the common perception where fences reflect a feeling of insecurity, both psychological and practical. In large cities in Indonesia, there are almost no unfenced homes, and this symptom reflects how the feeling of insecurity has evolved into a feeling of being threatened.”

“The aluminum cut-outs functioned like negatives....The plates left a silhouette, a negative relief without color; or a dark silhouette reminiscent of the dark shadows cast upon the screen of a puppet play....When these shadow puppet-like plates were placed upon the wall, Entang then realized how his works presented a narrative arrangement widely recognized as the base for most Indonesian traditional art works. Entang seemed to have once again found his ‘mother tongue,’ which at that time was still viewed as a language of *craft*, having the limited capacity to present a pleasurable beauty. Entang was not fazed by this general opinion on language, and later on would decide to expand upon it.”

Above (left to right):
Chronic Fanatic (detail), 2010, aluminum, cast rubber latex, steel bars, steel plate, 400 x 100 x 100 cm
Mr. Big Head (detail), 2009, aluminum plate, 210 x 120 cm



Black Goat In-Out Space, 2008, charcoal, spray paint, acrylic on canvas, mounted on wall, 250 x 1300 cm





On Going Pressure, 2009, charcoal powder, acrylic on canvas, 148 x 120 cm



Erased, 2009, charcoal powder, acrylic on canvas, 148 x 120 cm

Excerpts from:

The Vibrating Harrow: Love and Loathing in Entang Wiharso's Recent Work (Part I)

Dr. Amanda Katherine Rath has arguably written some of the most perceptive and well-researched essays on contemporary Indonesian art over the last decade. From her years spent in Indonesia, Rath has compiled a vast, encompassing and wildly diverse set of references and bodies of knowledge about Indonesian history, cultures, political and social systems, literature, customs, norms, art practices, manners, family life, etc. which have contributed to her unsparing, concise and nuanced examination of the Indonesian art world and artistic practice. Having frequently written about Entang's work, her original essay in "Love Me or Die" was composed of two sections: Part I of the writing was previously published in "Unease and Disease: Beyond the Veil of Social Order in Entang Wiharso's Work," in *Intoxic* (Yogyakarta, Rumah Seni Yaitu, 2007). In this piece, Rath examines the socially engaged nature of Entang's early work, discussing his imagery and narratives and his 'ethical humanism and powers of empathy' expressed in works that are based on personal experiences. Looking closely at several of Entang's pivotal works, she describes the repetition of certain characters, human 'types,' as well as metaphors and symbols in his visual lexicon, providing readers with background on puppetry, Javanese spiritual practices, and social norms along the way. This groundbreaking analysis of Entang's art lays the groundwork for Part II, which is republished in its entirety in this publication (see above). Following are excerpts from Part I of "The Vibrating Harrow: Love and Loathing in Entang Wiharso's Recent Work" published in the book "Love Me or Die" (Jakarta: Galeri Canna, 2010, pp. 83-110).



“Unlike other socially engaged art and social commentary, Entang’s work does not romanticize the *rakyat* (common people) as victims of oppression and corruption beyond their control. Rather, he openly explores humanity’s duplicitous and contradictory nature, as well as scrutinizes social relations.”



Above: *Learning to Illuminate - Remembering Landscape* (detail), 2001, oil on canvas, 200 x 300 cm
Below: *Before and After #3*, 2010, acrylic, oil on canvas, 154 x 250 cm



“Entang turns his critical eye on the ambiguities and conflicts that lay behind the fortress of images and cultural stereotypes we construct about ourselves and through which we define others. Entang includes himself and his complicity in such constructions.”

“...One of Entang’s many strengths is his ability to create dense, labyrinthian, almost hyper-link-like connections within and interdependent tangents between individual art works. Structurally, this is best expressed in Entang’s solo exhibitions, in which he constructs unity by strategically deploying repetition and singularity. Here exhibitions function as a unifying environment not between diverse and/or different works of art related via a theme. Rather, individual works of art present their own narratives, while simultaneously serve as fragments divulging specific aspects of a dispersed, highly textual pluraform yet structuring narrative.”

“...As we have witnessed from recent historical events, and that Entang abstracts into allegory, seldom do we (the universal We) attempt toward compassion and unity; We seldom ask whether the representations we construct of other people and groups are accurate or in need of revision.”

Left to right:
Exhibition view *InToxic*, Rumah Seni Yaitu, Semarang, Indonesia
Official Government Worker (detail), 2000, oil on canvas, 182 x 147 cm



“Much of my dialogue with Entang’s work engages the ways he constructs images of the human body and to what end as both discursive and rhetorical images. This is because representations of the human body not only populate his dense compositions, but also most often carry forward his allegorical meaning. In most of his art Entang obscures identity, human form reduced to repetitive types; these emphasize the effects of an institutionalized and disintegrated identity.”

“Entang utilizes the moral value of ugliness and the profane and their particularly Indonesian associations with subversion of the social order to suggest a rupture in the ideal order and morality of things. It is therefore not necessarily that Entang defies conventions of *halusness* [refinement], but rather that beauty and the social order it represents has, according to Entang, *already* lost its capacity to keep the ugly and social disorder out.”



Upside Down Temple, 2010, acrylic, oil on linen, 300 x 600 cm (triptych)



Excerpts from:

Between Artistry and Imagined Subjectivity

Syamsul Barry, artist, lecturer, author and former activist, is well-known for his outspoken views on art and politics. Focusing on video and new media work in his own art practice and as a faculty member at the Indonesia College of the Arts in Bandung, Barry has gotten to know Entang Wiharso well over the last decade. In his piece for “Love Me or Die” Barry interviewed Entang about the previous generation of Indonesian artists, the relevance of the traditional-modern-contemporary debate in art politics, his bi-national, globe-trotting family life, and his creative process and imagery. Barry writes, “Our conversations took place over the course of a week via phone, email and face-to-face meetings. This conversation was a natural extension of our long friendship: we have known each other since college, have worked together on various projects and often discuss art and politics.” Following are excerpts from “Between Artistry and Imagined Subjectivity” published in the book *Love Me or Die* (Jakarta: Galeri Canna, 2010, pp. 151-161).

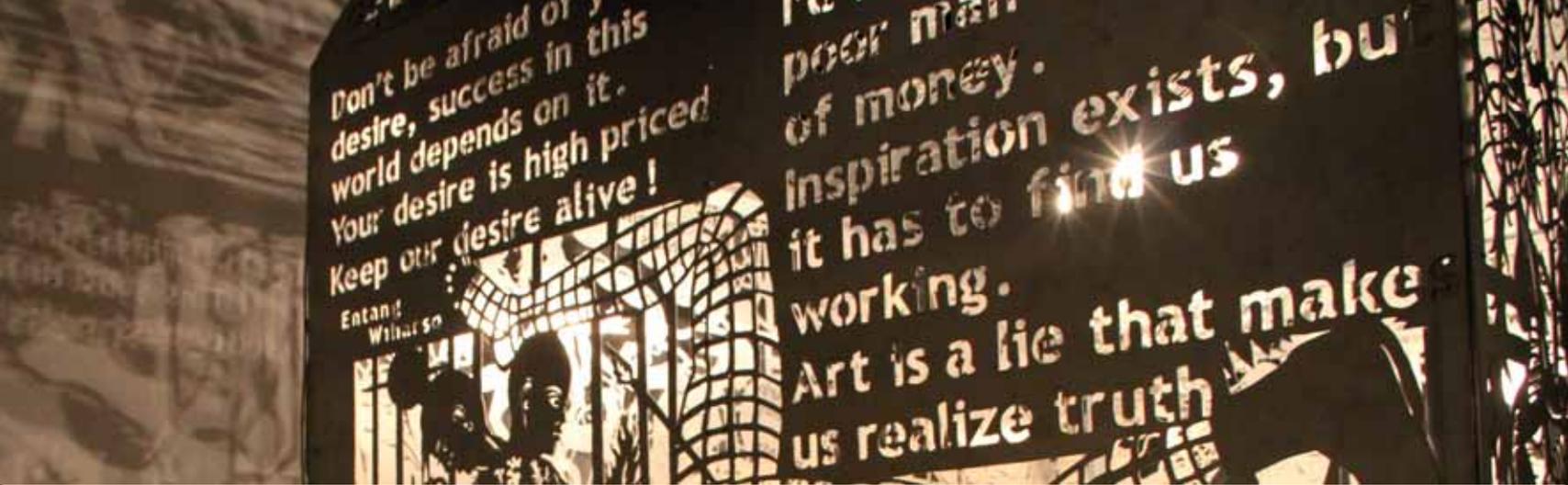


“The personal character of an artist is forged, in part, by the world around him or the physical environment where the artist lives. When an individual, an artist, is trying to seek ideas creatively, it would be easier to start from events, memories or the environment closest to him as he is always ‘running into’ it. Both physical and non-physical events that a person is subjected to influence and reinforce self-revelation. In order to find out what Entang Wiharso says about the issues affecting and inspiring his art I spoke with him on a wide range of topics.”

“**Syamsul ‘icul’ Barry (SIB):** What have your experiences been when developing your imagery? **EW:** My choice of media and the imagery I produce aesthetically hinge on the foundation of ideas I am exploring at any given moment. So, sometime in one month, individual pieces I am creating can look very different from each other. I’m not wedded to one aesthetic formula.”

“**SIB:** On a more personal front, you move around from one place to another quite often; sometimes you are in the U.S., at times in your hometown of Tegal, and at other times in Yogyakarta. Surely your experiences in such places are considerably different; I can even imagine that you probably dream in different languages - sometimes in Tegal, sometimes English and sometimes Indonesian! Could you tell me a little bit about how art discourses in the U.S., Europe or in Indonesia influence you personally? **EW:** In my opinion, the place where an artist works shapes and very much influences the character and the type of the artist’s works. A place tells much about its inhabitants. It puts the inhabitants in the social, political and cultural context of the surrounding....The character of the works of art in

Left to right:
View of Jl. Mataram, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Bus Chronicles (detail), 2010, car seats, steel frames, steering wheel,
aluminum plate, tires, flat screen TV, video player, sound system, dimensions variable



Indonesia very much showcases the values of a dialogue or communal values because they reflect Indonesia's way of life and how Indonesians think, in which upholding the interest, or the collective feeling and emotions of the masses, is of utmost importance. This collective mindset can be difficult for an artist to manage, or even lead to internal conflict, when applied to the creation of a work of art. By its very nature, art is highly individual and subjective."

"SIB: Can you tell me about your experience when exploring subject matter, particularly with regard to your current work? **EW:** I have two general approaches to creating work. First, I try to get away from work that is clean and has clear, easy to understand (easy to digest) messages, similar to posters. I want to tap into ideas that viewers contribute to. Second, I try to shape my visual language and enhance my statements through written texts that provoke or interrupt art, socio-political and local-global conditions...."

"SIB: What limits you or creates limitations for you when exploring subject matter? **EW:** ...The most dangerous [limitations in art making] are the ones imposed by an individual, a group or a government, in the form of censorship, which holds back the succinctness of the language in which the idea is expressed. ...Imagination, and the act of calling up our imagination, is a state that is very critical to exploration, to seeing all the possibilities on the broadest spectrum, and to knowing our internal selves."

“SIB: I notice the significant use of text in your current work. How has that developed and what is its purpose in your current body of work? **EW:** ...I’ve been collecting text for years, from newspapers, common sayings, political campaigns, jokes, quotes from important or influential people or characters from TV or films—some of it I use directly and some I alter to expose underlying meanings and to change the punch line. The placement of the text is important—the text can be a direct voice of the figures or sometimes something that is imposed on them. Sometimes the slogans are unclear (ethically or morally) and at times I allow this ambiguity to induce a mysterious atmosphere that triggers viewers’ imaginations....Text definitely plays an integral role, but is still only one portion of a grid of information that I try to create.”



Above: *SSSH...I'm Watching Art World Today*, 2009, aluminum, car paint, 120 x 200 cm
Following spread (left to right):
Chronic Fanatic, 2010, acrylic paint, rubber latex, steel bars, steel plate, 400 x 100 x 60 cm
Possessive, 2009, aluminum, 250 x 130 cm







Untold Stories

This body of work was presented in a solo exhibition featuring paintings, sculpture and installation and accompanied by a 48-page catalogue *Entang Wiharso: Untold Stories* published by ARNDT, Berlin with an essay by Amanda Katherine Rath. *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide* (2012-2013), a pivotal work from this period, was included in the Indonesian Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale. Sue Ingham of *Inside Indonesia* writes, "Of all the works, Entang Wiharso's *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide*, successfully draws on the traditions of the past to comment on contemporary life in Indonesia....This is an ambitious work from a sophisticated artist who can blend personal meaning and contemporary Indonesian references in an installation that is understood as a part of an international dialogue." Carla Bianpoen writes in her review of *Untold Stories* for the *Jakarta Post*, "Aptly capturing the content of Entang's works, a critic and journalist from Spain...said when looking at the works that she felt '500 years of the past and 500 years of the future.' This really is what this artist's works are about."



11 June – 25 August 2012
ARNDT
Berlin, Germany

1 June – 24 November 2013
Indonesian Pavilion, Arsenale
la Biennale di Venezia
Venice, Italy

Entang Wiharso's *Untold Stories*

First published in the catalogue *Entang Wiharso's Untold Stories* (Berlin: ARNDT, 2012)

Stories speaking of entangled histories and entangled stories speaking of histories that have been rendered possible. Stories and ever more stories that know only too well that each one uttered is but one possibility amongst a much vaster set of possibilities. How can I unravel and recount these entangled tales? ...Whatever becomes told—narrated—will be but one-short-story risked amongst a host of other possible stories. Whatever becomes told will be incomplete, as incomplete as the reality that is beside my feet and which I call stone, although to say ‘stone’ is perhaps to have already said too much (Yve Lomax, Sounding the Event).

A figure lies rigid on the ground as if bound to the spot. Head in profile, his sharp gaze is directed out toward the viewer. His expression is one of quiet apprehension and uncertainty, perhaps even fear. Slightly behind him sits another, smaller figure. She draws our attention to the closed umbrella grasped in her loved one’s left hand. The two figures, perhaps they are lovers, partners, are situated within a landscape that is both fertile and desolate. Painstakingly detailed foliage of tropical plants painted in silhouette, and the rugged barren hills upon which they grow are rendered in inky blacks. Watery streaks cascade down, seemingly eroding away waking reality. Floating above the scene are three islands roughly carved from the landscape below, water coming to take their place. One of them has come under attack, several *kris* (Javanese dagger) remain wedged in its surface. The distorted and dismembered bodies that inhabit these islands are in a palette of pasty reds and bubble-gum pinks. Cords, lifelines, bloodlines or bowels connect all the elements, and seem to end and begin with the male figure as if he dreams the world into being.

The above refers to the large triptych, *Untold Story: Floating Island*, an autobiographical work that brings together all the complex of figures, archetypes, and composite portraits to be found throughout *Untold Stories*, Entang Wiharo’s first solo exhibition with Arndt Gallery Berlin. The title of the exhibition is taken from the book *Pak Harto: Untold Stories*, which is part of an effort by family and remaining supporters to posthumously

re-fashion and put a more positive spin on the image of Suharto, the second and ousted president of Indonesia, whose authoritarian regime of more than three decades ended in 1998.¹ The disclosure of personal experiences and events, as well anecdotes and photos taken from private collections integrates the micro-politics of a man’s personal life with the macro-politics of the nation.² Appropriating the book’s title for his own exhibition is Entang’s response to what he sees as a false image. He also subtly taps into its inherent appeal of ‘personal disclosure.’ Like in his previous works, the artist posits his role and position as both story and storyteller, as storyteller embedded in the story.³

I chose *Untold Story: Floating Island* as my entry point into this new body of work because it represents the event ‘when it all began,’ when Entang woke from

¹ The title, *Pak Harto: Untold Stories*, is by no coincidence related to the 1968 CIA report regarding the role of Sukarno, the first President of Indonesia, ousted by the then General Suharto, played in the 1965 coup. The 1968 report by CIA analyst, Helen-Louise Hunter, was reprinted in 2007 under the title *Sukarno and the Indonesian Coup: The Untold Story*.

² Fittingly, *Pak Harto: Untold Stories* was launched at the Taman Mini Indonesia Indah or Beautiful Indonesia in Miniature Gardens, a kind of amusement park-national monument in which essentialized regional cultures serve as a series of visual tropes representing “Indonesian national culture.”

³ Joanna Lee, “Entang Wiharso: I Am Black Goat,” *Entang Wiharso: Black Goat Is My Last Defense* (Providence: 5 Traverse Gallery, 2008), p.9.



The American, 2012, graphite, resin, steel, brass, aluminum, color pigment, thread, 320 x 200 x 120 cm

The umbrella is present in every scene. It not only refers to needs of protection and the desire to protect, but seen in relation to the banana leaf - a practical and 'poor man's' umbrella - it takes on references to Indonesia's colonial history (then the Dutch East Indies) and questions of social status.

a dream to an unnerving sense of vulnerability. The basic idea for *Untold Stories* began with this experience and the need to process it. These events made him reflect on the past to search for clues as to what brought him to that moment. In part, this has entailed confronting underlying prejudices and perceptions some possess regarding Entang as a Muslim married to a Western woman. This period of intense questioning and research began with the artist tracing his own 'timeline' and reconstructing a foundational event in his life, in this case his wedding.

This personal narrative is but one thread to be traced in these works. As a whole, *Untold Stories* suggests a concern for what the artist calls small realities, or personal events in relation to larger, perhaps more encompassing narratives and histories.⁴ It is about stories nested into or colliding with other stories, other timelines. In this case, it is the personal narrative and those of the archipelago before and after it became 'Indonesia.' Both are present in the complex figure of the 'floating island.' Here I take three works in this exhibition, namely *Invisible Threat*, *Coalition: Borderless*, and the monumental *Borderless: Floating Islands*. In engaging these three works, what will become clear is how the artist uses certain visual devices such as scale, height, proportion, realism, and distortion to further delineate and compose highly dense composite figures that are at once both self-portrait and metaphor for the impossibility to grasp reality except from an oblique angle.

Invisible Threat is a rather large painting and depicts the artist and his wife in their wedding costumes. They stand on either side of highly detailed foliage rendered in silhouette, similar to that already discussed in the work above. The paintings in this exhibition in general lack the extreme expressive and nearly brutal quality so often associated with this artist. While the silhouetted foliage is common to many of his works over the last

five years, the pale, watery, almost timid-like appearance of his painted figures here seems specific to the narrative in this body of work. The faces of the couple are recognizable, but this side shy of realism. Here, two people come together to put down roots as a family (as with a tree).

The same set of relations is established in *Coalition: Borderless*, one of the 'floating island' series that demonstrates a marked shift in his approach to form and scale. His work typically has been large. The new work, however, is more massive and his wall reliefs have taken on a three-dimensionality not seen before. The scene here echoes that which is depicted on the central island in *Untold Story: Floating Island* discussed above. In this case, the wedding couple stands atop the floating island amidst and in front of dense and faithfully rendered foliage, which has been casted from real plants from the artist's garden. Entang maintains the accuracy of the cast real object, yet plays with the overall scale to create visual tensions for the viewer.

This piece is just one in a series of 'floating island' wall reliefs, each one given a gleaming polished surface. Of course, there might be a critical aspect to this reflective surface, and certainly a measure of deliberate irony. Yet, I cannot help but wonder if Entang is running the risk of overshadowing this criticality by enacting a kind of exoticization, of presenting 'highly collectible' stereotypes.

Borderless: Floating Islands is a monumental work, a tableau of three interlocking but separate 'floating' islands. On each one, Entang has staged a different family portrait along a timeline. Beginning left to right, a young couple takes shelter under the shade of the broad leaves of

⁴ Artist's statement via email communication, 27 April, 2012

“Early migration, the settlement of the Indonesian islands, the early people who came here, and their reasons, whether as refugees or merchants, those early motivations that shaped the land, social systems, interconnections, philosophy and conflicts...still impact us today.”

a young banana (?) tree. This couple is in the initial stages of getting to know one another. We have seen this composite figure before, the man lying on the ground, perhaps dreaming, while his partner sits beside him. The central scene is of the same couple on their wedding day, standing beneath a taller, more mature tree. Both bride and groom look with anticipation and confidence to the future. Here, two people come together to put down roots as a family (as with a tree). The third vignette, according to the artist, depicts a point in time after marriage, after two people have come together, bringing their own perspectives to the relationship. The result is an ever more complex and distorted picture. The umbrella is present in every scene. It not only refers to needs of protection and the desire to protect, but seen in relation to the banana leaf—a practical and ‘poor man’s’ umbrella—it takes on references to Indonesia’s colonial history (then the Dutch East Indies) and questions of social status.⁵

Anyone familiar with Entang’s work perhaps will be surprised to see all but the final vignette realistically represented. Christine Cocca posits that the artist uses realism to address questions of what is “really real.” In this regard the artist views more truth in deformation and distortion as more accurate accounts of reality. Through his deliberate use and manipulation of scale, height, proportion, distortion, and realism, he underscores that reality is never fixed and understanding of it is deeply perspectival, and hence inherently distorted and incomplete.

⁵ In conversation with the artist, 8 May, 2012.

⁶ The information in this paragraph is informed by Christine Cocca, email 2 May, 2012.

⁷ Entang Wiharso, email communication, 2 May, 2012

Because of its height, a lot of the visual information is above eye level and hence obscured from view.⁶ In forcing the viewer to look up and strain to see more, the artist creates a kind of meaningful distortion in that we can see and access some things, but only partially. He forced this aspect of the partial view further when *Floating Island* was first exhibited in *Re.Claim* at the National Gallery in Jakarta this last March. There he installed a series of CCTV cameras set to record what the viewer could not see from below, as well as a bird’s eye view of the people as they observed the work and milled about the space. The real-time images were projected through TV monitors mounted next to the work, affording different, partial views, including that of people watching themselves and others observing the work. In this, the artist has added the element of surveillance and knowingly being observed, of observing ourselves from another angle.

In further articulating the basic concept of this and the other ‘floating islands’, the artist explains:

I’m interested in trying to go much further back along the timeline, to trace events (small actions) to a historical and geological history that we feel we no longer know. Early migration, the settlement of the Indonesian islands, the early people who came here, and their reasons, whether as refugees or merchants, those early motivations that shaped the land, social systems, interconnections, philosophy and conflicts that still impact us today. I am trying to trace back the history...How is this history of ideas, land, migration, ecology contained within our actions today?⁷

The sediment of history does not necessarily come across when confronting the works in this exhibition, but is quite telling about the artist’s process.

I end my discussion of Entang Wiharso’s *Untold Stories*





Undermind: Can We Stay Together?, 2012, aluminum, brass, resin, color pigment, thread, 108 x 110 cm (figure 1), 106 x 55 cm (figure 2), 112 x 60 cm (figure 3)



The result is a seemingly inter-connected world as if Entang's memories of past experiences and interactions have come flooding back all at once.

with his *Temple of Hope Hit by a Bus*, one in a series of Temples of Hope that the artist began around 2009 with the first exhibited in his 2010 solo exhibition at the National Gallery in Jakarta. It marked a shift in his work, combining cut aluminum and caste reliefs, and installation to create an interactive sculptural space of monumental proportion. It has since become one of the iconic works of Southeast Asian contemporary art.⁸ Elsewhere, I have written about the first in this series of Temple of Hope⁹, portions of which are reproduced here:

The work is...akin to Freud's conception of the 'mystic writing pad' (read generally and simplified here)...Images that have been drawn onto the pad can be erased but they always leave behind some trace of inscription in the surface below. *Temple of Hope* is like such a chain, with the past returning to the surface as recorded memory, a string of non-linear associations....The result is a seemingly inter-connected world as if Entang's memories of past experiences and interactions have come flooding back all at once. They mingle, combine, distort, change, and morph as the viewer moves around the work.

If seen from the outside, the elaborately carved walls of the Temple are illuminated from within, projecting image and text onto surrounding surfaces. As we read

⁸ *Temple of Hope: Forest of Eyes* (2010-2011) is in the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) Collection. It has been shown at the artist's 2011 solo exhibition at the Primo Marella Gallery in Rome, and [was] on view in *Panorama: Recent Art from Contemporary Asia* at SAM (on display through 25 December, 2012). *Temple of Hope: Hit by a Bus* was included in *Asia: Looking South*, Arndt Gallery in Berlin, September 2011.

⁹ Amanda Katherine Rath, "The Vibrating Harrow: Love and Loathing in Entang Wiharso's Recent Work," in *Love Me or Die* (Jakarta: Canna Gallery, 2010).

¹⁰ Entang Wiharso, email communication, 2 May, 2012

and move around the Temple, it casts its shadow on our skin, thus repeating an act of inscription of sorts.

In this work, Entang combines the devices...of shadow and light in the *wayang* with...relief sculpture that traditionally adorns the Hindu-Buddhist temples that dot the islands of Java and Bali. Reliefs are meant to be read as the devotee circumambulates...the exterior walls prior to entering the central chamber or sanctuary....In many cases, symbolic cloth patterns have been carved in shallow relief onto outer and inner walls of temple and sanctuary, suggesting a symbolic protective membrane, as well as a kind of barrier that must be crossed in order to gain the next level in a person's spiritual journey.

The viewer-initiate may enter *Temple of Hope*, but like the initiate to other temples, we have to work in order to "get inside" his head or head of memories. The initiate to *Temple of Hope* must "go underground," crawl underneath the structure.

The above passages remain apt when discussing the artist's most recent *Temple of Hope Hit by a Bus*, similarly an intricate network of visual and textual interactions, an inter-connected world of non-linear events. The images in the work suggest a collision of ideas and beliefs. They "reflect relational power struggles and the prevalence of polarizing views. [I counter] those realities with images that express the seductive force and fragility of sensuality and desire."¹⁰ *Temple of Hope Hit by a Bus*, although damaged, "the main structure of this contemporary temple is still strong."



Above: *Expanded Dream #2*, 2011, brass, aluminum, resin, color pigment, thread, handmade carpet, 250 x 92 x 80 cm
Following spread: *Borderless: Floating Island*, 2011-2012, graphite, resin, steel, brass, color pigment, thread, 350 x 750 x 140 cm







Interfere: Reclaim Landscape, 2012, acrylic, oil on canvas, 150 x 202 cm



Above: *Expanded Dreams #4*, 2011, brass, resin, color pigment, thread, handmade carpet, 230 x 140 x 90 cm







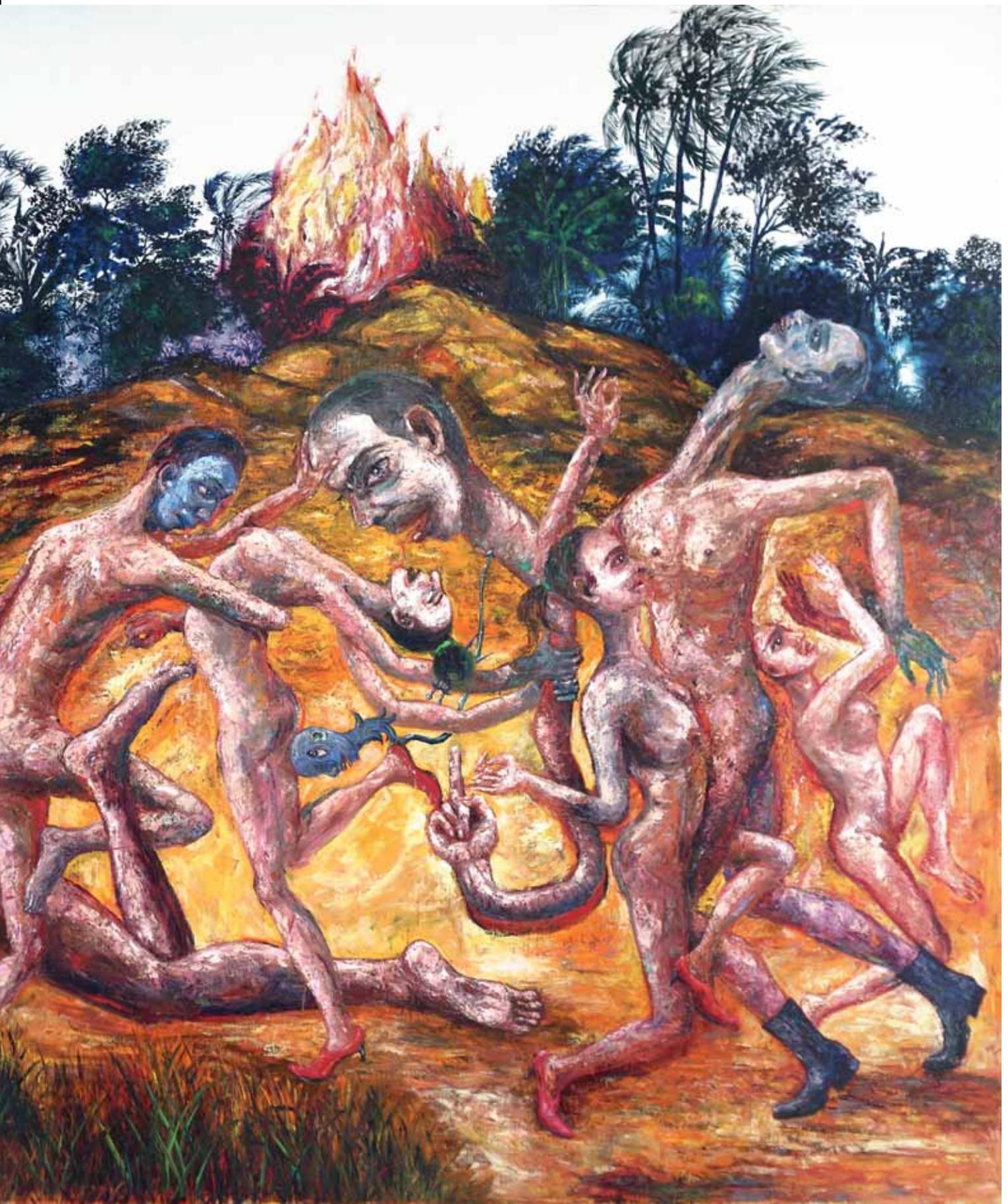
Previous spread: *Expanded Dreams Tableau: Wagon Series*, 2011, resin, graphite, color pigment, thread, light bulbs, steel bar, cables, wood, LCD projector, 400 x 1300 cm (Exhibition view ART/JOG 2011, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia)
Above: *Untitled*, 2012, watercolor on paper, 25 x 15 cm



After Agreement: Reclaim Landscape, 2013, watercolor on paper, 200 x 109 cm

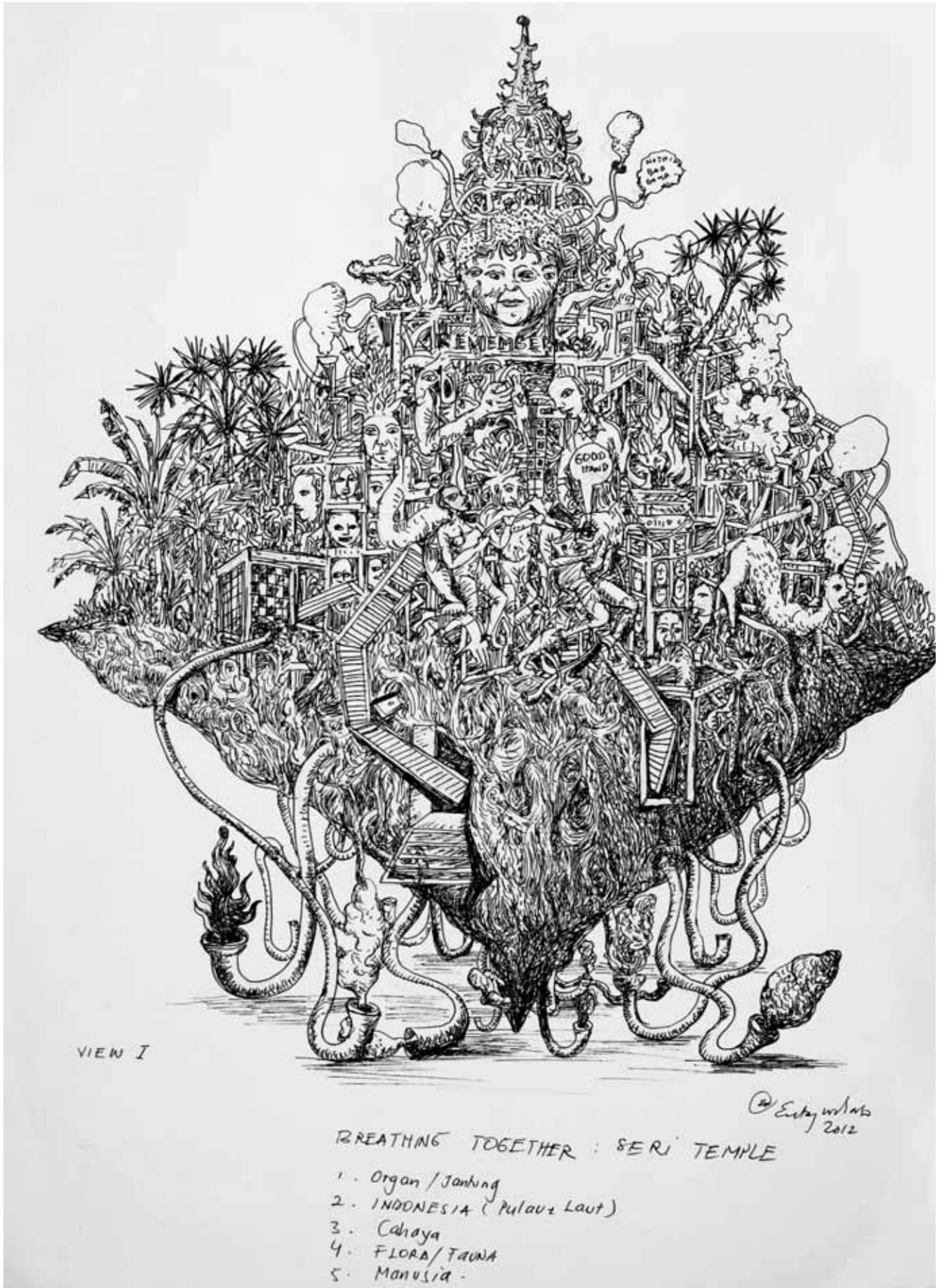


Above: *Second Skin and Second Landscape*, 2011, oil on canvas, 277 x 480 cm
Following spread: *The Other Dream: I Love You Too Much - Wagon Series*, 2011-2012, aluminum, resin, color pigment, thread, motorcycle headlights, 275 x 400 cm









Breathing Together: Temple Series (study for Indonesian Pavilion, Venice Biennale), 2013, ink on paper, 42 x 30 cm



Above: *The Indonesian: No Time To Hide* (study for Indonesian Pavilion, Venice Biennale), 2013, oil on canvas, 70 x 106 cm
Following spreads (page206-209): *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide* (detail), 2012 -2013, graphite, resin, thread, color pigment, steel, flame light bulbs, electrical cable, 1500 x 550 x 500 cm (Exhibition view Indonesian Pavilion, Arsenale, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2013)





YOU MUST LISTEN TO ME!

THE POWER OF THE WORD

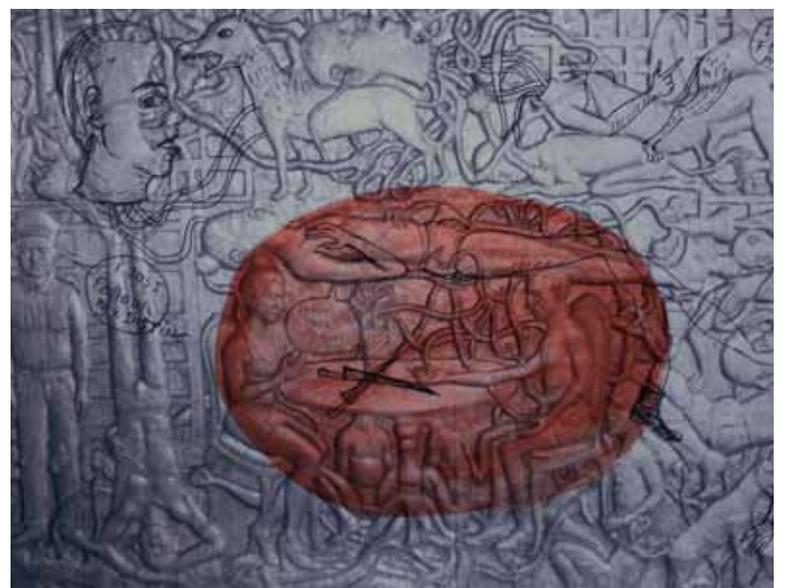
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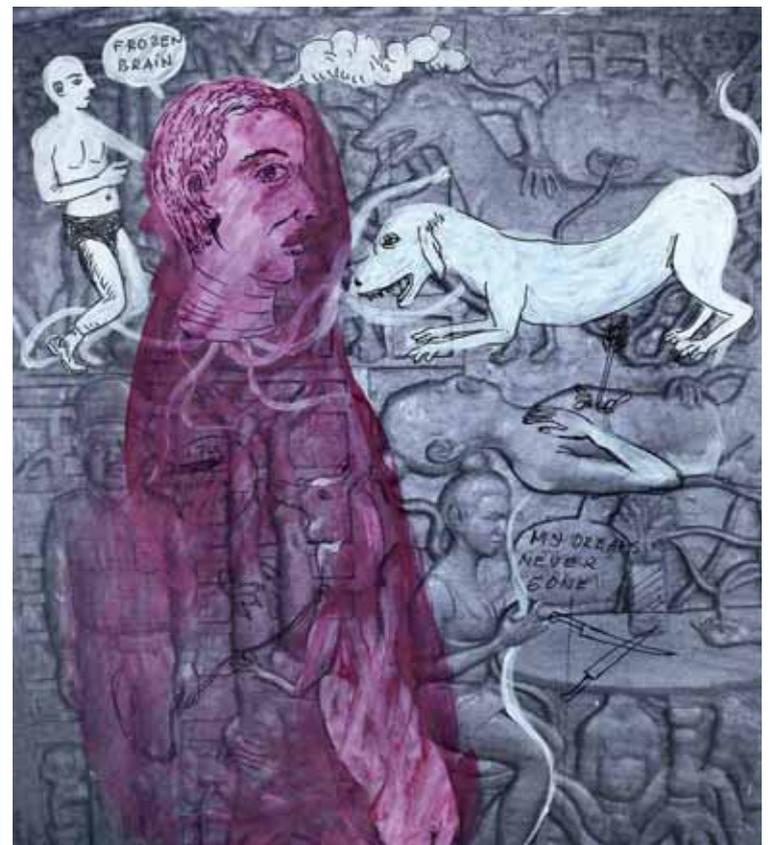
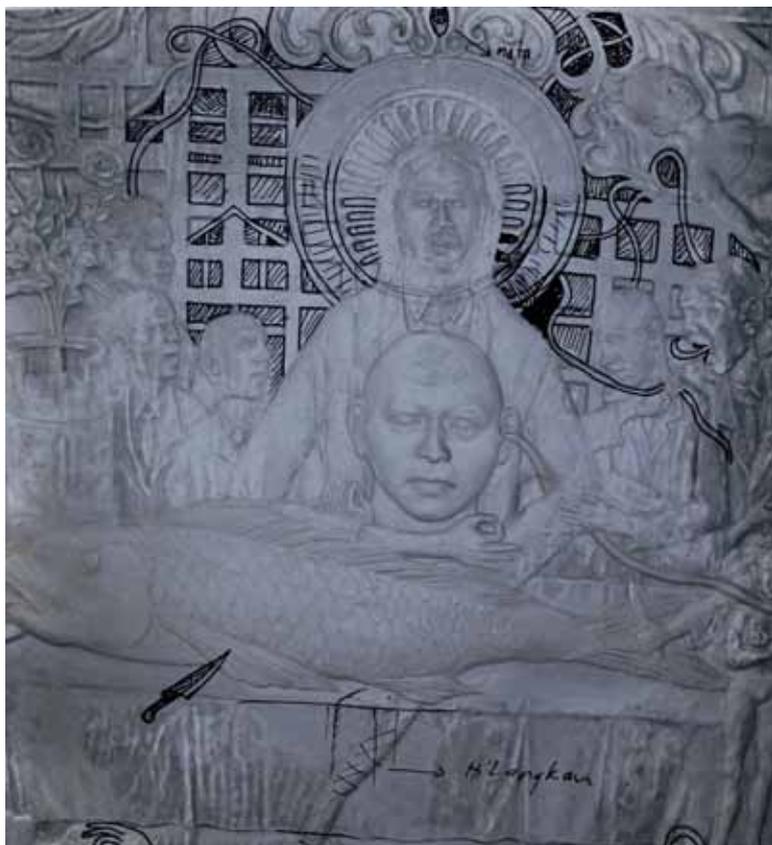
THE POWER OF THE WORD

THE POWER OF THE WORD









Opposite: Sketches for *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide* (detail), 2012, ink on paper, 21 x 30 cm
 Above (left to right): Sketches for *Altar: Reclaim History*, 2013, ink on paper, 40 x 60 cm
 Below (left to right): Sketches for *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide* (detail), 2012, ink on paper, 21 x 30 cm



Above and opposite: *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide* (detail), 2012 -2013, graphite, resin, thread, color pigment, steel, flame light bulbs, electrical cable, 1500 x 550 x 500 cm (Exhibition view Indonesian Pavilion, Arsenale, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2013)
Following spread: *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide* (detail), 2012 -2013, graphite, resin, thread, color pigment, steel, flame light bulbs, electrical cable, 1500 x 550 x 500 cm (Exhibition view Indonesian Pavilion, Arsenale, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2013)











Opposite: *The Indonesian: No Time to Hide* (detail), 2012 -2013, graphite, resin, thread, color pigment, steel, flame light bulbs, electrical cable, 1500 x 550 x 500 cm (Exhibition view Indonesian Pavilion, Arsenale, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, 2013)
Above: *Reclaim History*, 2013, brass, aluminum, resin, thread, color pigment, flame light bulbs, electrical cable, 2010 x 112 x 59 cm



Geo-Portrait

This body of work was presented in three solo exhibitions in three countries; China, Switzerland and Indonesia. Featuring painting on canvas and paper, prints, photos, sculpture, installation and video work, each iteration offered a different exhibition title and composition of works to highlight specific aspects of the theme. *Crush Me* was accompanied by a 60-page catalogue published by Pearl Lam Fine Art, Shanghai with contributions by Amanda Katherine Rath, Nicola Trezzi and Helena Spanjaard. *Geo Portrait* was accompanied by a catalogue published by Primae Noctis, Lugano with an essay by Rifky Effendy. *Geo-Portrait #2* was accompanied by a 90-page catalogue published by Komunitas Salihara, Jakarta with contributions by co-curators Asikin Hasan and Nirwan Dewanto. In a review Susie Gordon writes, "In *Crush Me*, his first solo exhibition in China, Entang Wiharso displays an aesthetic that is at once disturbing and surreal as it is appealing and brutally real." This sentiment is echoed by Sam Gaskin in Blouin, "*Crush Me* is not only a scream but also an invitation, a masochistic solicitation...."

Exhibition view, *Geo-Portrait #2*, Salihara Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia, October 2013



Crush Me
20 May – 28 June 2013
Pearl Lam Galleries
Shanghai, China

Geo Portrait
6 June – 13 September 2013
Prima Noctis
Lugano, Switzerland

Geo-Portrait #2
12 October – 11 November 2013
Galeri Salihara
Jakarta, Indonesia



Exhibition preparation and views, *Geo-Portrait*, *Prima Noctis*, Lugano, Switzerland, June 2013



Exhibition preparation and views, *Crush Me*, Pearl Lam Galleries, Shanghai, China, May 2013

The Indonesian Diaspora

First published in the catalogue *Crush Me* (Shanghai: Pearl Lam Fine Art, 2013)

Entang Wiharso represents one of the most interesting voices in contemporary Indonesian art. He is one of the leaders of the scene, having been involved in organisations like Antena Projects and the Jogja Biennial, and he has always paired his core practice—consisting of sculpture, paintings, installations and performance reflecting many aspects of Indonesia and its current state of dynamic development—with side projects that underline his public engagement. Since meeting Entang and his family, we have been involved in a series of conversations about art, the future of our planet (always starting either from Indonesia, Italy or the United States), our individual futures, family and friendship. “Friendship” is in fact the real nature of my relationship with Entang, his wife Christine and his sons Dominic and Marco. The following conversation took place in Rhode Island during one of my visits from New York.

Nicola Trezzi (NT): Let’s start with your family, your origins: you come from Java, your mother had a food stall and you worked for her. How was it growing up in Indonesia?

Entang Wiharso (EW): I have strong memories of growing up and living in Indonesia. The strongest memory is always of being in transition and moving. Indonesia is classified as a developing country and during my life has been in transition from an agricultural into an industrial nation. My parents also transitioned during that time from being farmers in rural Tegal to entrepreneurs, opening a food stall in Jakarta. This was not only a physical change, moving from one place to another, but it was also a mental or psychological paradigm change.

NT: Transition seems to be a dear word to you. Do you see yourself in transition with your work? Especially now since you divide yourself between Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and the state of Rhode Island in the United States. Is your work transitional? And if so, why?

EW: Of course this condition steers my practice as an artist. That’s why I like working with many different

media. It is a reflection of my mindset and the way I am living on this planet. If you see the word “transitional” as meaning “in-between,” then I do think my work is transitional as it looks at this in-between state of being which is full of tension and awareness. I try to create this experience for viewers, to force them into an alertness or attentiveness.

NT: I know your work is imbued with Indonesian tradition, especially Javanese tradition. I was wondering when you decided to incorporate your national identity into your work and what artwork clarified that decision?

EW: This has been a part of my work from the beginning when I was in art school. At that time, I often incorporated these traditions into my artwork, but only as an aesthetic expression, meaning the surface. After moving to and living in the United States, the use of my Indonesian identity became deeper and more psychological. I think this stems from the experience of living away from my home country. I felt more connected with Indonesian history and culture. My art practice helped me to escape the feeling of being lost. Another stronger way to see this is that I was taking a stand as a minority amongst the majority.



NT: I understand. Basically, your practice became mature when you lived between Rhode Island and Indonesia in the late 90s with your wife Christine, who has been a recurrent presence in your work, especially the paintings. Was it during this time that you developed the concept of “black goat”? I know you have already talked about this with other people many times, but I wonder if you can tell me about this pivotal symbolic figure in your practice and about the biographical connection to it?

EW: Black Goat. I use this term in two circumstances. The first is in relation to my identity as a person, and the second is my identity as an artist. I have been using the black goat figure to create a portrait as an outsider, to reference the experience of being misread and also to highlight the position of always struggling and being at a distance from the establishment.

NT: Is your position—away from the establishment—something that you feel because of your social context? Or is it a position you took towards the establishment?

I am curious to know more about this because to me you are, in a way, the establishment of Indonesian contemporary art. It might have taken a long time and a lot of struggle, but you can surely agree on the fact that you are among the most respected Indonesian artists in Indonesia and abroad.

EW: This is how I feel about myself and my practice. Other people may evaluate my position in the context of recognition, but those are different stages or platforms. I am talking about my own perspective as a person and as an artist. My anti-establishment stance is more of a mindset rather than a methodology. My art practice is in opposition to the general opinion about what constitutes contemporary art, specifically in Indonesia.

NT: There is tension between being a leader and also being self-contained, so then my question to you is: Is your leadership in opposition to what you describe? You titled your show at the National Gallery in Jakarta “Love Me or Die,” which I always thought could be the statement of a king or a commander. This idea of



leadership and command is even clearer in your work *The Family Portrait* (2012), a light box featuring a photograph of your family: you, Christine and your sons Dominic and Marco, dressed in traditional Indonesian royal costumes.

EW: The title “*Love Me or Die*” is meant in an ironic way to explore intolerance, questioning how individuals make choices and define their position in relation to others. That mentality, expressed in the title and exhibition, often leads to fanaticism that takes many different forms. *The Family Portrait* is a project-based work dealing with this theme by tracing my own history and by looking forward at the same time. This work is about an Indonesian attitude and is a satirical look at Indonesian regulations governing citizenship. *The Family Portrait* is a starting point for talking about the Indonesian diaspora, a situation that is generally ignored and of which Indonesians are mostly ignorant.

NT: It’s interesting to hear you associate your work with the concept of irony. I never thought your work was

ironic and I think this is part of our cultural distance, being myself an Italian living in the United States for the last five years. Would you like to expound on this concept of irony in connection to the Indonesian identity? Which artworks of yours would you identify in this regard?

EW: Perhaps you are right about our cultural distance. I think that makes sense because in any work of art you can find layers of meaning and these layers generate complexity and highlight cultural differences and, thus, interpretation can often lead to misunderstanding. From my experience, reading other cultures is not easy, but for me this state of uncertainty is very fascinating and intriguing. Do you remember that in Javanese culture “yes” can mean “no” or that I very seldom say that I don’t like something? Instead, I say I “less than” like it. It is more in how you say it than what you say. I make strong commentary about this in the work *Eating Identity* (2008) and in *Crush Me #2* (2012–13).

NT: Yes, I know that Indonesians have another understanding of the dichotomy of agreement versus



disagreement. I am also very intrigued by your notion of Indonesian diaspora. Can you please tell me more?

EW: The idea of an Indonesia diaspora is still a new and unfamiliar concept for Indonesians and I think this is because of our colonial history. A resistance towards something foreign still exists even though the Netherlands no longer holds any power here. The landscape of regulations and laws that were adopted during colonial rule to protect Dutch wealth and their interests still exists in Indonesia, but affects people today in unexpected, unsettling and problematic ways. This condition has led

to a lot of question about the Indonesian diaspora in my work, especially since the birth of my two children.

NT: Your family, your life, and your identity are so present in your work. Can you please tell me about your installation *Temple of Hope Hit by a Bus* (2011)? I also would like you to speak about your autobiographical paintings.

EW: That is true about my family because they are so important to me. I use painting as material to talk about my identity and family. I feel with painting I am more

Crush Me #2, 2012-2013, graphite, resin, color pigment, thread, light bulbs, electrical cable, steel, 340 x 650 x 88 cm



connected to the material and I am able to express myself more intimately and directly. Some of my work does have autobiographical content. At this time in my life, I have been dealing with how and where to live and raise my kids. How do I position my family? The place where we live significantly impacts how we live and how I have to work.

The installation *Temple of Hope Hit by a Bus* is less about family and more about ideology. This work is about the fundamental structures that exist for creating tolerance. People basically need to live peacefully in

their environment, but political and religious ideologies can create narrow structures that protect their interests. When threatened by globalisation, they define their position and destiny through aggression, but at the same time it is marketing as well. Ordinary people feel they have to accept this situation. Two things in this work stand out—one is that a corner of the structure is damaged by a bus, depicting a collision of ideas and beliefs, and the other is that the structure is still strong—the positive being stronger than the negative.

NT: For your exhibition in China at Pearl Lam Galleries

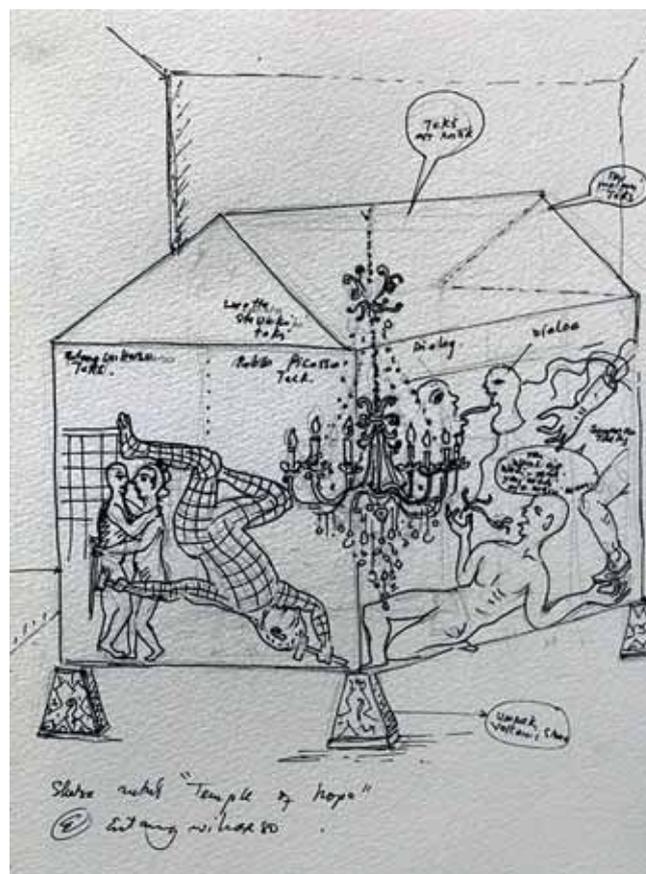
From my experience, reading other cultures is not easy, but for me this state of uncertainty is very fascinating and intriguing.

in Shanghai [20 May—28 June 2013], you will present five large new paintings and a frieze. Will these paintings also be autobiographical? Were they conceived as a series or does each work stand on its own? Tell me about the idea behind the show.

EW: All the works in this exhibition have autobiographical content—some of it is obvious while some is more hidden. The idea behind this show is about something coming to me or something already inside of me like history, experience, family, places, people, politics, culture and so on, and how to deal with that. Those things can crush me, change me, or pass me.

NT: Sounds like an epopee, which brings me to the next question, which I have wanted to ask you since the very beginning. I would like you to talk about “personal mythologies.” Starting with the notion of Black Goat and continuing with what we have discussed so far, I feel your work is building a parallel narrative, a sort of mythological cycle of events incorporating you—of course as the main character, the hero, the Hercules or Ulysses, if you allow me to use Western myths—your family, and your environment. I would like you to comment upon that and tell me if you ever thought about your work in this way, as mythological. But before that, what is the title of the show in China?

EW: To answer the last question first, the title of the exhibition is “Crush Me.” I took it from the title of one of my works that will be in the show, which is a wall/fence with autobiographical content on it. Basically, my portrait becomes the wall and this relates to my Black Goat identity. The concept behind Black Goat comes from an Indonesian term, *kambing hitam*, which in English means both scapegoat and black sheep. It is a “grey area” condition—the outsider, the victim of such a condition. I took this as a self-portrait, as a person and as an artist.



There is a very established art institution in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, and they have a very strong opinion about the shape and form of Indonesian contemporary art. Starting many years ago, they wanted to control the definition of Indonesian contemporary art in the international market, but to me their ideas were totally naïve and didn't make sense, even though they dominated the discourse. Mostly artists wanted to be associated with them to gain international connections or to have contact with the “international landscape,” but I refused to agree or participate with their definitions. My identity as Black Goat developed as being an outsider to this dominant paradigm in the Indonesian art world, and this idea gave me a lot of personal power. I saw myself as very much an autonomous, struggling and misunderstood figure. I lost a lot, but I also gained a lot. Regarding “personal mythologies,” I do not create that kind of notion but I have created stories based on my personal life, meaning history, memory, dreams, conflict and social and political realities. For Indonesians, talking about reality is also simultaneously talking about myths because the real and the unreal (the mystical) are intertwined.

Above: *Sketch for Temple of Hope*, 2009, ink on paper, 30 x 20 cm

Opposite: *Temple of Hope Hit by a Bus*, 2011, graphite, steel, resin, thread, color pigment, light bulbs, electrical cable, 300 x 325 x 225 cm



empathy to everyone. Empathy is the
It's to build shared experiences
noticed how many
of people.

Stay
Calm

I am going
to reach
our dreams
with love

Stay
focus

I have strong memories of growing up....The strongest memory is always of being in transition and moving....This was not only a physical change, moving from one place to another, but it was also a mental or psychological paradigm change.



NT: Is there any trace of Indonesian mysticism in your work? I know you are very careful about the content of your work and sometimes you prefer to keep the mystery, which I think is a very good idea. I wonder though if there is any legend like the *kambing hitam* that is dear to you and that you inserted into your work.

EW: No, there is no content of Indonesian mysticism in my work. I don't know if I want to "keep the mystery." I like to explain everything because basically for me art is the content—the physical material and the ideas. In other words, I try to open any dialogue in order to share all the possibilities, concept-wise or material-wise. Yes, there are so many *kambing hitam* in this world. I am

Bus Chronicles (detail), 2010, car seats, steel frames, steering wheel, aluminum plate, tires, flat screen TV, video player, sound system, dimensions variable

For Indonesians, talking about reality is also simultaneously talking about myths because the real and the unreal (the mystical) are intertwined.



sure at some point—through a condition or moment—any person can become Black Goat. It is a condition that occurs again and again, so many people can relate to this experience.

NT: Coming full circle, my last question could actually be my first question: when did you realise you were an

artist? When did you wake up and think the only thing you could do was to make art?

EW: I believe since I was small, my passion for art has led me to this point, no matter what my condition is.

Crush Me #2 (detail), 2012-2013, graphite, resin, color pigment, thread, light bulbs, electrical cable, steel, 340 x 650 x 88 cm

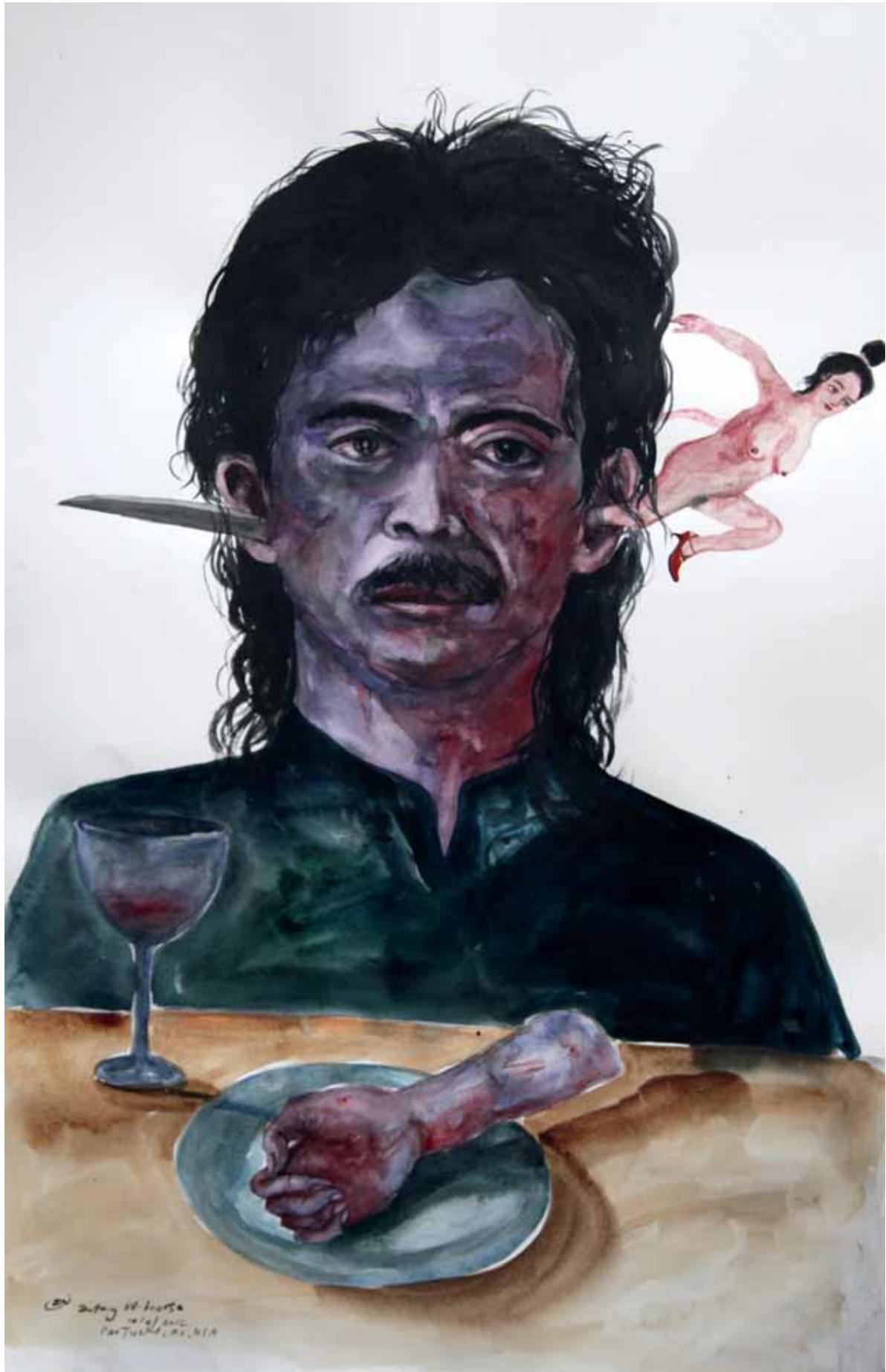


Under Family Portrait, 2012, oil on galvanized steel, 240 x 400 cm





Timeless, 2014, oil, acrylic on canvas, 186 x 200 cm



Looking After Me, 2012, watercolor on paper, 100 x 64 cm

ENTRAILS

First published in the catalogue *Geo-Portrait #2* (Jakarta: Komunitas Salihara, 2013)

1 The lamp is heart-shaped. Or more precisely, that lamp is a heart. But not just any ordinary heart. It is a large heart that sprouts tendrils and trunks. As though the heart is trying to reach out.

Trapped inside a “temple,” the heart sends light outward, slipping through four openwork walls, creating a dance of silhouettes on gallery surfaces.

The walls of this “temple” are not ordinary walls, either. Those walls are actually flat figures that have lost their backgrounds: humans, or human-like creatures, interconnecting playfully with organs and flora, floating above a certain emptiness.

The loss of background creates openings where light, radiating from the heart, can slip through.

Figures of people in many shapes and sizes. In Entang Wiharso’s “realism,” the large and the small are equals. (Meanwhile, in Entang’s other works—showing a group of people—we will not find distinctions of either class, gender or cultural setting).

Protruding from the walls of this “temple” are many eyes, various eyes, be they eyes that act as part of the body—in place and function—or eyes that stand independently alone.

Therefore, in Entang Wiharso’s works, the eye, heart, tongue, intestine, and other internal organs often appear in contention with the whole body itself.

These organs can fly unaided, stand on their own feet, act autonomously. And perhaps, think independently.

And often times, those human bodies may act as mere supplements to these organs. Various entrails have become such striking ornaments that we cannot help

but be inexplicably drawn in by the terror and humor.

2 We can recognize a sort of evolution of the human form in Entang Wiharso’s progress.

In his early paintings, those bodies—or part of those bodies—seem to rise out of a cemetery of colors. It can be palpably felt how these figures are not the purpose. Instead, they are risks arising out of each gesture and notch of paint on the road of “new expressionism.”

Even in works of that period, it is already apparent that the various faces, arms, and legs are independent. They do not need bodies. In addition, a variety of eyes seems to dart on their own. It is as though Entang’s canvases can already see before they are seen by the audience.

If those bodies seem very prominent, then they actually appear flat-and-sideways, like figures of *wayang kulit*. Those faces with protruding eyes are things that remind me of ogres and *punakawan* (jester-servants from the wayang world), as well as Javanese and Balinese masks.

It is not my intention to connect Entang’s works to any sort of object from any traditional heritage. The painter himself is furthest from any literal steps to enliven the Javanese spirit, so to speak.

It wouldn’t be amiss if we are to say that in the 1990s, Entang was reacting against “decorativism” and “Yogyakarta surrealism”—dominant disciplines that not only showed a literal referencing of Indonesian artistic heritage, but were also based upon fine execution, realist techniques, sophistication, and tended toward the aesthetic (beauty).

But neither would it be wrong to say that Entang has also absorbed influences from world art, for instance the works of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Georg Baselitz. And



it is apparent that he has transcended these influences, to arrive at “a realm beyond what the eyes can see.”

And these are the forms that at some moments can feel comfortable in their imperfection, and that in other times can feel the need to destroy what perfection they have achieved. Forms that restrain themselves in some opportunities, but may also be allowed to self-explode, so they may expose all the content and every entail.

3 These figures are stacked one on top of the other, somersaulting, without background. All of them seem to be pushed to the foreground. No event can touch them. These are things that we can find on Entang Wiharso’s canvases from the 1990s.

Those who feel comfortable with Indonesian modern art (either “Bandung school” or “Yogya school”) will feel terrorized by Entang’s works.

Dull colors with blood-red stains here and there can “freeze” us in terror or other similar feelings. And perhaps, more than that, we never really know what these paintings are about. The audience is left uncertain.

These half-finished bodies may remind us of a fetus inside the womb. A fetus that might be born into the world or might yet end up being miscarried as a lump of flesh.

However, these figures were also born out of Entang’s

Therefore, in Entang Wiharso's works, the eye, heart, tongue, intestine, and other internal organs often appear in contention with the whole body itself.

own nightmares (if I may take a rather biographical approach). That is, nightmares that occurred because the painter had to bargain with a doctrine that prohibits the drawing of living beings, especially humans. (This is the kind of doctrine he received from members of his extended family, who are adherents of NU [Nahdlatul Ulama]).

Thus, Entang's figures straddle what is real and unreal (surreal), between what exists and that which is empty, between the pure and the sinner, like the supernatural beings in *kejawen* [Javanese mysticism].

As we may witness in the next step, Entang's figures have moved toward a more human-like form, more realistic, more concrete in experiencing both terror and fright. It may also be an attempt to answer the failure of a project intended to create the "perfect human" or "the complete human."

4 The people we witness in Entang Wiharso's various canvases appear prominent, with their bald heads and protruding eyes. In the painting "Portrait in the Gold Rain" (2003), for instance, we see a face with a wide open mouth, or a screaming mouth, that reminds us of Edvard Munch's "Scream" or works by Francis Bacon. While slowly leaving the style of "new expressionism," creating lines and forms that are more orderly, Entang is attempting a more palpable violent trail.

The faces now seem more human (so, no longer reminding us of *wayang kulit*, masks, or supernatural beings), despite often looking as though they have melted. Well, actually not just "melted." Maybe we can say that the painter is negating, maybe decomposing, his own creations.

At the same time, perspective began to emerge in Entang's paintings. We recognize a feasting table that extends

toward the horizon in "Mermaid" and "Forbidden Exotic Country" (both works from 2005). But this great long table is just an interruption to the figures of naked people that appear in various perspectives, poses, one on top the other, and certainly unrelated to a feast.

It is clear that these are faces and bodies without identity. We will never recognize their geographical environment or the culture they occupy. Yet, they seem to be multiplying themselves in many variations, in different degrees, moving between perspectives in unexpected ways.

The above monotony is sometimes interrupted by the appearance of various foreground and background elements—ever so slightly, for instance the clouded sky, roses, or a stack of paper.

Repeating, duplicating figures have become Entang's way to achieve some semblance of a theatrical scene. In other words, these figures are not making action. They are acting.

5 When looking at Entang's works, we might feel divided by various impressions. When he seems to speak about violence, we will discover what is the opposite of violence, like humor. When he tries to give us beauty, we might also discover the opposite, i.e. ugliness.

Thus, the theatricality in Entang's works is a way for his creations to share their "responsibility." So if we receive an impression that the work is about violence, then we will not find either the violator or the victim.

Thus, theatricality is also a way to make fun of one's self. If social realism describes class contradictions, then Entang's works describe "a society without class." Not just a swarm of people without social strata, but also

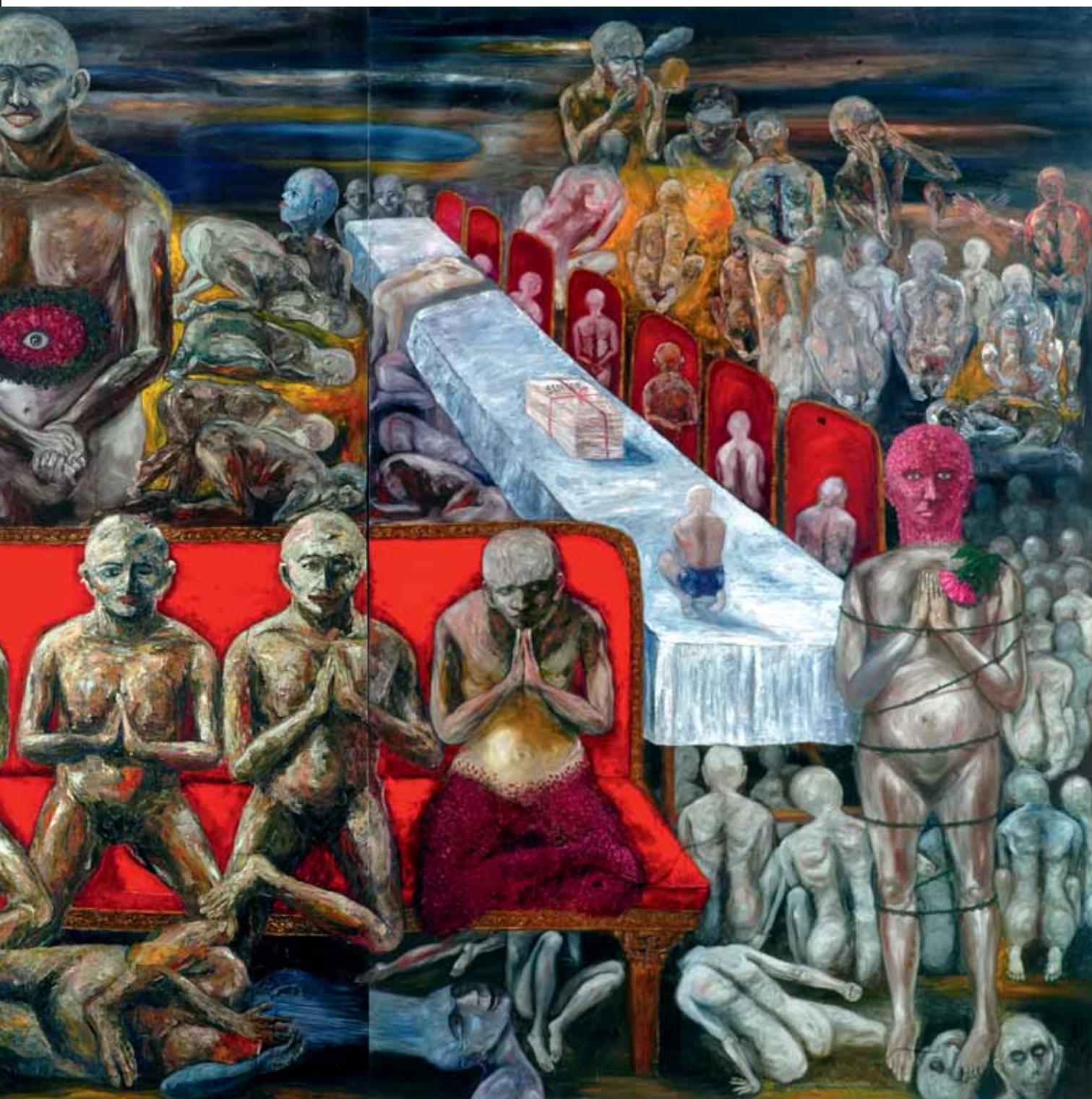


without clothing, without geography, without cultural heritage, without gender. Here too, Entang's humor satirizes (comments upon) feminism and other-isms that enjoy antagonism and binary opposition.

Entang's theatricality does not stop here. His three-

dimensional works present "the complete human," appearing in a ritual of "showing off": these realistic figures are certainly prominent, or allowed to be prominent, as things coming out of a mold. They are "enlivened" through various properties (such as microphone, reading light, plate, television set), arranged

Forbidden Exotic Country, 2005, oil on linen, 300 x 600 cm (triptych)



in a row or in a circle. Here, monotony seems to culminate through the expression of each figure, centered on the eye-ball: the same-equal-uniform expression that is now satirizing either expressionism, the “visible soul” (*jiwa tampak*) doctrine, or art that champions feelings and emotions. But this sort of “expression” is often not

needed. Therefore, bodily organs leave their positions to become an independent organism. In “Forest of Eyes” (2002), we witness the sheer number of eyeballs “sitting” in a circle around a metal fence, these eyeballs “look” upwards, to the sky above.



6 Certainly, I will be erroneous if I take “formative evolution” to mean a forward linear progression. In actuality, Entang can move sideways, branch out, even jump backward.

When he worked diligently on the installations mentioned above, he also created works that borrowed the formal characteristics of *wayang kulit* or *wayang klithik* (but with their faces forward). These forms, far from becoming more realistic, have become more grotesque, with the grimace of the jester-servant *punakawan* or the grimaces often encountered in paintings by Yue Min-Jun.

At the same time, he seems to enjoy creating ornaments. But, wait. We will never see ordinary ornaments. Instead, behold: legs that grow into toothed vines; tongues so long they create a bridge between two heads; dense appendages hanging out of a severed neck. All of them are ornaments, but certainly not to entertain.

These bodily organs shoot out not just to state the depths of a human being, but actually to declare the shallowness of *Homo sapiens*, how empty this machine of desire is that is built upon parts that can have their own life, yet is so easy to decompose.

Forest of Eyes, 2002, acrylic, resin, metal fencing, wood, miniature Javanese hats, grass, plants, dimensions variable

Repeating, duplicating figures have become Entang's way to achieve some semblance of a theatrical scene. In other words, these figures are not making action. They are acting.

The tongue often represents the flatterers, but the very long, outstretched tongue actually makes the symbolism into something superfluous. If the act of flattery becomes a power and no longer a tool, let the tongue be the bridge, the highway, the flaming blaze, or the tree trunk.

Thus, these bodily organs, as composed by Entang Wiharso, have become a reverse-mirror that reflects a person's mental capacity. Things that were repulsive are now presented as seekers of beauty. Things that were animalistic now unfold in front of lovers of the sublime.

By making the things that are inappropriate into ornaments, Entang is even deriding modern art that shunned ornamentation.

7All the things I refer to as "entrails" in this text are organs that have abandoned their places—the human body—and that have sped out to make themselves known. Heart, eyeball, tongue, kidney, esophagus, brain, placenta. These are the entrails we will often encounter in Entang Wiharso's works, at least since the mid-2000s.

These entrails can be independent, but they may also be tethered to the body while still fighting against it. No other Indonesian painter demonstrates such a loyal "love" for entrails as Entang Wiharso.

In our daily lexicon, organism is synonymous to living creature. In Entang's visual lexicon, however, "organism" is like a doctrine (an -ism) about, and that which speaks through, the human organs. Entang Wiharso's "organism" is a parody of organisms as found in biology.

Entang's entrails can still appear as themselves, but they can also be altered into, for instance, flames, an octopus, plant vines, a keyhole, a peeled-off ball, a swing, an embankment, or the tail of a comet.

These organs are not just reaching out; they can be exploded, twisted, broken, or they can grow to cover the body from whence it came, to spend—or destroy—dreams about the perfect human or the complete human.

We can see this in Entang Wiharso's metal cutouts in this exhibition, for instance.

8Entang Wiharso's aluminum (or brass) cutouts and reliefs serve as a kind of resolution of all his visual experiences thus far.

Imagine, for instance, him drawing his figures—humans, entrails, plants, various objects—onto enormous aluminum plates. Then he throws away—cuts away—all possible backgrounds. It results in an openwork area, erected for us. And so all we can see are figures as foreground. (This is an analogy, not at all an explanation, of Entang's techniques employed in creating these works).

The surfaces of these figures themselves can be flat (the flatness of the drawing space), or they can be rather spatial and three dimensional.

These aluminum works, in their size and sheen, seem to have distanced themselves away from Entang's paintings. In actuality, they do no such thing. As I mentioned earlier, his work is "painting" that has lost its background, in addition to losing the texture, drips, scratches, and—certainly—paint colors. This "painting" is clean, free from noise.

The sheen of metal can help an object declare itself as the "thing" of today, while paintings declare themselves as a "thing" of yesterday. In these cutout works, our eyes are invited to trace the twists and curves of lines, i.e. the sharp-decisive contours that separate art from its surroundings.



The figures are themselves realistic, as though a sublimation of the figures in Entang’s three-dimensional works. However, their frightening effects diminish or disappear, alongside a dampening of eye-gazes and mouth-grimaces.

These cutout works certainly feel very current and “industrial.” However, I also feel that Entang Wiharso has jumped backward subtly, cleverly absorbing the wealth of heritage.

This is a metamorphosis of the reliefs often found in Javanese temples (*candi*) and in *wayang kulit*, presented to an era of global mass culture. The figures intertwine—decorating one another, inviting light to make them into a play of shadows on the wall.

Entang Wiharso underlines ornamentation as the backbone of post-modern art.

9The installation work as mentioned in Part 1 of this text—which may be regarded as the “center” of Entang’s current exhibition at Galeri Salihara [12 October—11 November 2013]—is titled “Temple of Hope Hit

by a Bus.” However, we will never approach Entang Wiharso’s temple to offer sacrifices.

Temples, as we know, are places of worship. Sturdy temple walls protect what is inside: the sacred or the sanctified. This sturdiness acts as a fortress that holds at bay the infiltration and invasion of worldly things and the profane, originating from its surroundings.

Entang’s “temple” with its openwork walls clearly allows what is outside to enter, and the things inside to crawl out. This construction seems to be floating, tethered to earth only by its four supporting legs. We can enter or leave by breaching a large gap between its feet.

The walls of Entang’s temple remind us of *candi*’s reliefs or a church’s frescoes. However, this impression is temporary. Looking closer, we may encounter figures that come from today’s scene, such as superheroes, comic book characters, and graffiti texts. These figures act out various poses, interconnected on top of a labyrinth created from either vines or entrails that have grown long and winded.

Temple of Hope Hit by a Bus (detail), 2011, graphite, steel, resin, thread, color pigment, light bulbs, electrical cable, 300 x 325 x 225 cm

Thus, theatricality is also a way to make fun of one's self. If social-realism describes class contradictions, then Entang's works describe "a society without class." Not just a swarm of people without social strata, but also without clothing, without geography, without cultural heritage, without gender

Entang's temple is a parody of religious temples. The openwork roof of "Temple of Hope Hit by a Bus" features quotes from various figures like Jalaluddin Rumi, Kahlil Gibran, Christine Cocca (the artist's own wife). These quotes speak about empathy, love and tolerance.

Entang's temple looks fragile and profane: one of the corners is dented because it was "hit by a bus." Once again, the artist has defeated the serious and the sublime—characteristics of a temple—with play, with a character of play that is often off-beat. This is a temple that enjoys itself in all its leakages.

Radiating out of this temple is illumination from a heart-shaped lamp. An enormous heart that is yet to complete its life, still-beating. This lamp might remind us of the hearts once belonging to Aztec temple sacrifices from long ago.

Entang cleverly provides a temple for predators of global mass culture, for hedonism that sometimes breeds intolerance, violence and ethnocentrism. The temple of hope—possibly an upside-down temple or even the anti-temple—is presented to those who enjoy wearing religious masks.

10 *Geo-Portrait #2* is a self-portrait camouflaged as other portraits. Portraits about many surroundings where the self is hidden more often than not—where the "I" becomes the "us."

Meanwhile, the prefix "geo-" can be taken to mean "geography," that is, of those moments when Entang explores the surface of the earth, moving horizontally across many cultural settings; it may also mean "geologic," when the artist moves vertically to the depths, mining symbolic layers that form his current cultural topography.

Geo-Portrait #2 is an idiosyncratic title created by Entang

himself; it slips us up and makes us question the work we are looking at. It is common for Entang to lead us into a semantic trap, especially in his self-portraits.

For instance, in "Melting Family Portrait" (2008), he painted his own face and the faces of his nuclear family—not "melting" but actually "bloated," each face with a pair of eyes. Our eyes "melt" in double-vision.

There is a *Geo-Portrait #2* work entitled "Fake and Real – Live Together Forever": a flower pot that—we will have guessed correctly—is made from a gas cylinder, holding synthetic flowers that will never wilt. On the body of that vase are reliefs of figures that he appropriated from US modern tattoo references.

All the elements in "Fake and Real" declare and duplicate one another. As though ridiculing the principles of authenticity—boasted by defenders of the originating culture.

Geo-Portrait #2 is a parody about "ethnic culture" that has become ensconced within global mass culture. Signposts that mark the imaginary boundaries around a cultural sphere will become like that gas cylinder-vase—something fake but real. Meanwhile, the whole world is almost inundated by a sea of global pop.

This Tegal-born person, child of a couple who once opened a *warung Tegal* in Jakarta, who easily traverses the world to grab the remnants of global pop culture, all the while mining the geological layers of an ancestral legacy, so he can access various historical-entrails; he is called Entang Wiharso.

11 On the arrangement of Entang Wiharso's works for this exhibition, we can build an imaginary route.

We may begin with "Family Portrait": a portrait of a



The Family Portrait, 2012 (Exhibition view *Estate*, a project by Lucie Fontaine at Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY)



Above: *Geo Portrait (study)*, 2012, photograph, 120 x 196 cm
Following spread: *The Family Portrait*, 2012, LED light box, 120 x 196 cm







family—Entang, his wife, and his two children—in a rather idiosyncratic pose. Here, for instance, the artist brandishes a folded umbrella.

Then we approach “After the Agreement.” In one of the panels, it is not difficult to recognize the male-and-female couple as being the same as the parents in “Family Portrait.” On the third panel, all of those figures are “disturbed” by twisting ropes, which may actually be intestines or an umbilical cord.

We then arrive at “Crush Me.” It is clear that the four figures on both panels are the same ones that appear in “Family Portrait”; as well as the plants appearing in the background. However, the grown man in one of the panels is fully unclothed (naked).

Our route through the three works is an attempt to put into proportion the Javanese sense and a sense of worldliness. Javanese traditional garb, banana trunks, *cupu*- and *meru*-shaped fences. They are all signs that float and contend with the twisting intestines, umbilical cords and cables. And identity politics must also contend with nakedness. Therefore, “destroy me”—“crush me”—has come to mean that you can only destroy my surface, because I am actually a mental-entail that can grow into new bodies in any cultural setting.

Before crossing to the “Temple of Hope,” we must first move past the sign post called “Fake and Real—Live Together Forever” that, as I have mentioned above, reminds us that our perceptions are what produce reality, especially cultural reality.

After the Agreement: Borderless #3, 2013, brass, resin, color pigment, thread, 110 x 250 cm



However, unmeasured perception will make us blind. Thus, in front of us is a temple—a “temple of hope” where all our knowledge about temple-as-a-sacred-place is being negated.

These days, when the sacred is often found intersecting with fundamentalism, when a temple (i.e. religion) often blinds their true believers, Entang has provided us with a kind of profane temple that “leaks” everywhere, whose walls have many eyes. Eyes that can be borrowed by those who have been blinded.

12 The entrails of our consciousness are the subconscious. If we satisfy ourselves with beauty and fineness in art, Entang Wiharso will continue to urge us toward the insides, toward ugliness and violence. Beauty is merely the tip of an iceberg.

The depth of our modern art is *jiwa tampak, jiwa ketok*, or the visible soul, as stated by S. Sudjojono. However, the effects of *jiwa tampak* will become tradition, will become all-beautiful, and all about the surface. Each of Entang Wiharso’s works is *jeroan tampak*, a visible entrail, a parody of the *jiwa tampak* principle.

The human is already overly processed by modern art: their body and soul depleted—and destroyed. And so, now the artist must dare to work on what’s left of the human. The entrails—the internal organs that engage in questions-and-answers with the body from which they came. This is what Entang Wiharso is doing.

When our consciousness directs us to global pop culture, contemporary art aims at our subconscious through pop fragments. In other words, contemporary art has become

The tongue often represents the flatterers, but the very long, outstretched tongue actually makes the symbolism into something superfluous. If the act of flattery becomes a power and no longer a tool, let the tongue be the bridge, the highway, the flaming blaze, or the tree trunk.



a sub-version, the underground version, the internal-organs version, of mass culture. Therefore, Entang's *geo-portrait* is a way to rip at the atlas of consciousness.

In *Geo-Portrait #2*, self-portrait is interchangeable with various portraits of cultural settings that the Self wants to enter: like an entrail seeking for bodies that can rival it, alienate it, adopt it or crush it.

Geo-Portrait #2 may also mean "mental geology," an attempt to swoop inside, piercing the layers of heritage.

Maybe he will find a mental entrail "somewhere underneath," that he can pull upwards to enrich his art. Without "mental geology," artists will find themselves trapped in exoticism and orientalism. (We have spoken of, for instance, Entang's metal cutout works that remind us of *candi* reliefs as well as *wayang kulit*).

Looking at Entang Wiharso's various entrails, I am soon bewildered: it is very clever how people plant seeds of violence under things that are beautiful, polite and useful.



Fake and Real - Live Together Forever, 2013, imitation flowers, graphite, resin, color pigment, thread, 30 cm diameter x 120 cm







Previous spread: *Crush Me*, 2012-2013, graphite, resin, color pigment, thread, light bulbs, electrical cable, steel, 340 x 650 x 88 cm (Exhibition view *Art Stage 2014*, Singapore)
Above: *Under Geo Portrait*, 2013, acrylic, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm





I Love You Too Much #1, 2012, oil on linen, 179 x 145 cm



I Love You Too Much #2, 2012, oil on linen, 179 x 145 cm



Geo-Self Portrait, 2012, oil on linen, 300 x 600 cm (triptych)



Excerpts from:

Crush Me

Dr. Amanda Katherine Rath is an American researcher currently based in Frankfurt, Germany who has traveled extensively throughout Southeast Asia, having lived in both Indonesia and Malaysia. Her sense of global art trends and the position of Indonesia within the framework of an international art community inform her analysis of Entang's work exhibited in *Crush Me* at Pearl Lam Galleries, Shanghai in 2013. Following on the heels of the announcement that Entang would once again be representing Indonesia as one of five artists at the 55th Venice Biennale, Rath's essay looks at the recent shift, as seen in Entang's *Geo-Portrait* body of work, toward an examination of the 'weight of history' through private experience. Having written extensively about his work in the past (several of her essays are reprinted and excerpted in other places in this publication) she reveals Entang's efforts to align his personal history with 'the epic dimensions of the national story,' interweaving memory, identity, geography and perception in large-scale installations and allegorical paintings. Rath examines the autobiographical content, analyzing specific pieces along with Entang's use of 'landscape,' 'barriers and borders' and 'tables' as key constructs in his work. Following are excerpts from *Crush Me* published in the catalogue *Crush Me* (Shanghai: Pearl Lam Galleries: 2013, pp. 6-13).



“Through his often-multilayered allegorically structured works, he turns a critical eye on the ambiguities and conflicts that lay behind prevailing social expectations and norms....This has entailed engaging the fortress of images and cultural stereotypes that we construct about ourselves and through which we define others. The artist includes himself and his own complicity in such constructions. He often puts forward images and tableaux that suggest human agency is rife with paradox, the very condition and thus the possibility of agency.”

“Fundamental to Entang’s most recent works are issues of memory and geography and the intertwined pathways of identity, place, and becoming....It is not surprising, then, that ‘landscape,’ ‘barriers and borders’ and ‘table’ are persistent subtexts in his work. For Entang, these provide frames through which he articulates the exterior and interior selves and worlds as types of terrain and inseparable realities.”

“In conversation, he spoke of the process of repetition, of painstakingly painting the iconic surface of the birch as both an obsessive and meditative process. Here, the artist invites us to recognize the meditation while also presenting us with a refusal. The all-over patterning, a recurring feature in Entang’s work, is both an intended ornament and a kind of skin. We are marked by our skin. It carries perceptions and prejudices that place us as a ‘member,’ or different or forever the outsider. The way that the birch tree sheds and re-grows its ‘skin’ is, therefore, a telling reference in this new work. The meditative, repetitive act of reproducing the detail is akin to the continuous process of remaking one’s identity.”



“Entang Wiharso employs the wall as metaphor for the ways in which individuals and groups build barriers (psychological, ideological, social, physical, etc.). The barrier is simultaneously a means of protection and of denial; it serves to protect the sovereignty of the individual or the group, as well as to keep others out. *Crush Me #2* is a visually arresting work for its sheer size, the appeal of its monochrome dark matte surface, and its imagery. For me, it is also the visual embodiment of the exhibition concept. The work is a double-sided wall....Typically used as a compound enclosure, such massive demarcations separate so-called public space and lands from government and private property, the mundane from sacred space, the common from the elite....While the wall acts as a protective barrier, it serves as the surface upon which the artist publicizes the very private narrative it was meant to defend.”

“Here, he translates the formal family portrait similar to those composed endless times in the various photo studios of a colonial past, into a series of sculptural graphite and resin figures represented in elaborate traditional Javanese costume....Reference to the visual rhetoric of public sculpture, particularly of images of national heroes, may be an underlying device as well. The stance of each figure, and the fact that they each hold a weapon, engenders the perception of a formidable presence, one prepared to protect the private, the family.”

“...The artist took his wedding as the foundational personal event that comes to represent not only a union, a foundation of a family and a private fortress of love, support and protection. It also comes to represent the shared, yet individual, experiences of an international couple coming to terms with culture shock, prejudice and misrepresentation.”



“It is flanked front and back by what appears to be two nude sentinels, one with aspirations to protect, the other with a hidden agenda to do further harm. Entang has explained that the two sentinels are in fact two aspects of the same identity, and the fish embodies his feelings of being a stranger or an outsider that he has experienced over the years as he and his family move back and forth across different cultural contexts.”

“...The table features prominently in Entang Wiharso’s work. It serves as a kind of mental terrain, a space and stage, on, under, and around which a variety of dramas and power games play out....The table quite often is both a barren field and the repository of the artist’s hopes for the future....In his arsenal of symbols, it also carries sacrificial and anthropophagic connotations....”



Feast Table, 2010, aluminum, car paint, resin, thread, color pigment, colonial style teak table, 175 x 400 x 100 cm



Feast Table: Undeclared Perceptions, 2012, aluminum, brass, machine-made Persian carpet, gold leaf, resin, thread, color pigment, 200 x 300 x 400 cm



Rejected Landscape, 2012, oil on canvas, 285 x 500 cm





Happy Victim, 2012, oil on galvanized steel mounted on stainless steel frame with rivets, 244 x 488 cm (4 panels)





Pride and Prejudice, 2012, oil on linen, 200 cm x 300 cm



Excerpts from:

The Duality of Love

Dr. Helena Spanjaard is an art historian specializing in Indonesian modern and contemporary art. She has written about Entang Wiharso's work in various other books and publications, investigating his contributions to the development of new art and discourses within the context of Indonesian art history and trends. Offering a 'western' analysis of his work, Spanjaard reports on the sense of confusion and anxiety new audiences may feel when confronting Entang's unsettling imagery. She explores the issue of identity present in his art, looking into his Javanese background and cross-cultural experiences for resources that can explain the symbols, figures and deformation in the work. Spanjaard suggests that portraiture, and in particular portraits of the artist's family, are a site for negotiating cultural compromise through tolerance and resistance, love and confrontation. She ends with an analysis of 'artist as mediator,' suggesting there is a traditional role for artists to wield power as healers or mystical intermediaries. Following are excerpts from "The Duality of Love" published in the catalogue *Crush Me* (Shanghai: Pearl Lam Galleries, 2013, pp. 24-29).



Left to right: *Why Are You So Hard to Love*, 2012, aluminum, resin, color pigment, thread, 250 x 170 cm
You Lost When Someone Felt Hurt, 2012, aluminum, resin, color pigment, thread, 160 x 110 cm



“In this pair of paintings the duality of love is shown. The two figures are connected by sincere love and care for each other. At the same time the emotions and passion that accompany their connection could become a hindrance for the human ideal of ‘selfless’ love.”

“Every human being possesses feelings and emotions. In [and of] themselves these feelings and emotions are neutral. It is our personal responsibility in which direction we guide these forces in ourselves.”

“...Beyond the duality of the emotional world there exists a broader, lyrical peaceful and empathetic realm. This underlying stream of love is always present in the oeuvre of Entang. In this way a balance is created between all the different sides of the human being. Inner contradictory conflicts can be solved by the power of love, is the ultimate message. Sexual energy..., existential loneliness..., fear to be discovered..., the consequence of aggression...and the fear to be unreachable...are all themes that point to emotions and feelings that at last can be overcome.”

“...The role of an artist in Indonesia has been associated with...certain invisible powers....The more this power is visible in his artworks, the more it is appreciated by the public....The general respect for an artwork in Indonesia is quite remarkable and based on older notions about sacred mediators....It is believed that [artists] mediation between the spiritual (‘*batin*’) and material world (‘*lahir*’) helped to heal sickness or to bring about a psychological catharsis (just like the ideal of the classical Greek drama). In my opinion, the artworks of Entang Wiharso are not so far away from this mediator role. His ultimate goal is to heal the wounds inside. In order to be able to do so, they must be shown first. The fact that we as an audience feel uneasy observing the dark side of the human being probably means that deep inside us the reflection of all these extreme emotions rings a familiar bell....”

Left to right: *Pride and Prejudice*, 2012, oil on linen, 200 cm x 300 cm
Memorial Landscape (detail), 2012-2013, acrylic, oil on wall, approximately 350 x 1500 cm,
(Installation view of mural, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, Australia)



MADE FOR
CLAIMING



I LOOK YOU
ALL THE TIME

Excerpts from:

Notes on the Geo Portrait Exhibition by Entang Wiharso

Rifky Effendy is a Jakarta-based curator who often works with galleries and is recognized for his efforts to bring art to a broader public through the creation of the Bandung Biennale and the Jakarta Contemporary Ceramics Biennale. In 2013 he had his first significant engagement with Entang Wiharso's work as curator of the Indonesian Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale. In his essay for Entang's solo exhibition *Geo Portrait* at Primae Noctis in Lugano, Switzerland, Effendy's research focuses on prior published analysis of the artist's work. He writes about Entang's painting roots, exploring his art activist opposition to authoritarian New Order policies during the Suharto regime. Entang's preoccupation with ethics and morals and the ambiguity of human nature are briefly explored. Effendy then turns to an analysis of the artist's life and mindset, suggesting how history, geography and a series of natural disasters in Java inspired recent work, including several of Entang's black graphite installations. He describes Entang's use of text and pop culture icons, exploring the syncretic symbolism in many of his recent wall reliefs, describing his work as 'a form of catharsis.' Following are excerpts from "Notes on the Geo Portrait Exhibition by Entang Wiharso" published in the catalogue *Geo Portrait* (Lugano: Primae Noctis, 2013, pp. 3-9).



“He perceives the body as a marker that possesses the essence of history, experience, memory, rejection and elimination, all within a complex context, one that captures physical and symbolic meaning.”

“As proposed by the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, the works of Entang portray a community with a *carnavalesque* character. While the value of what is good and bad may seem obscure, everything is conceived as a celebration of life. Nothing is pure there, all is not completely clear, shrouded in artificiality in one cornucopia of events.”

“These trajectories of memories and reflection of experiences motivated Entang to again enquire about intercultural personal relationships through his marriage, producing a narrative about the value of love and life and its clash of values and differing societal perspectives.”

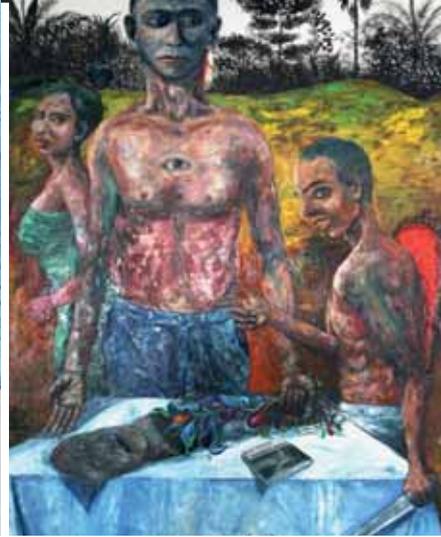
“Entang also often features works of borrowed iconography from history and religion, an example being ‘No Place to Hide’, a silver-coloured relief with a configuration derived from Leonardo da Vinci’s fresco, The Last Supper...This work seems to feature a court where a person is distributing a very valuable object associated with welfare to the masses. Some are patient and obedient; some do not get their share, and others seem to obtain it fraudulently.”

Left to right:
Undermind Table #2, 2012, aluminum, resin, color pigment, thread, 75 cm x 108 cm
No Place to Hide, 2012, aluminum, resin, color pigment, thread, 130 x 120 cm

Excerpts from:

The Character and the Setting

Asikin Hasan is a curator, writer and journalist whose career has brought him into close contact with the power struggles of both the nation and the art world. Trained as a sculptor, he graduated from university and immediately began working as a journalist and then in 1996 took up curating for socially minded galleries in Jakarta, ultimately working on projects in Indonesia and abroad. Hasan co-curated Entang Wiharso's exhibition *Geo-Portrait #2* at Galeri Salihara, Jakarta in October 2013. His essay for the catalogue looks at Entang's work through the prism of theater, building an overarching analogy where elements of the artist's work are likened to the 'character' (humans) and the 'setting' (atmosphere, location, space and time) of the stage. He explores Entang's depiction of human beings in his paintings juxtaposed against environments that are overwhelming and full of unexpected images. He asserts that Entang's move toward sculpture and installation was the point when the 'setting' was minimized and character and narrative emerged as the focus in his work. Hasan concludes that Entang's choice of media enhance the trajectory of ideas within his art. Following are excerpts from "The Character and the Setting" published in the catalogue *Entang Wiharso: Geo-Portrait #2* (Jakarta: Komunitas Salihara, 2013, pp. 75-79).



“The human is that which all other things on earth are measured against.”

“In paintings that mostly feature humans as subject matter, Entang has never drawn humans following the ‘correct’ and ‘precise’ anatomical model. It seems as though he is trying to go against the idea of an ideal human. So, we should not expect to find a character with perfect proportions on his canvases. Instead, we will continue to encounter characters that are distorted, strange, odd and unlike any other human being we encountered in daily images.”

“The characters in his paintings depict life that is far from orderly.... We cannot immediately understand the boisterous images in his paintings. Is this a celebration, a scene from an insane asylum or a picture of someone possessed?”

“...The disappearance of a settings in some of his paintings is an effort to place the focus on the characters in question...to detach these characters from the chaos, noise and elements that burden them: tradition, culture, religion, environment, etc. This disappearance also marks the transition that Entang has made, from one medium to another: from canvas to aluminum sheets and three-dimensional forms created from cast metal and resin.”

“A tendency to repeatedly investigate themes or to develop ideas present in previous works is characteristic of Entang....These are practices in search of a particular intensity.”

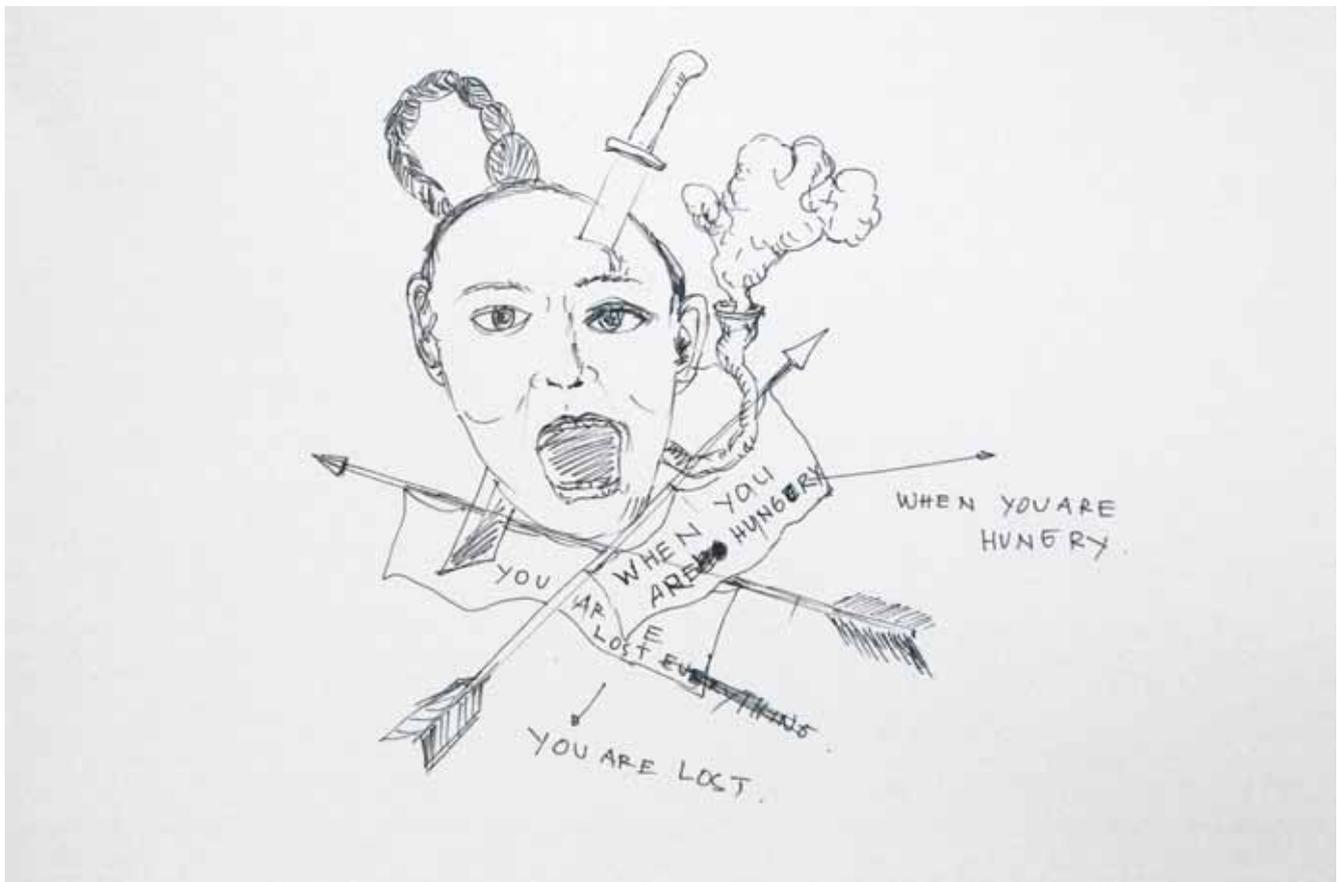
Left to right:
Under Geo Portrait - Reclaim Landscape (detail), 2013, acrylic, oil on canvas, 150 x 200 cm
The Untold Stories (detail), 2011, oil on linen, 250 x 150 cm
Borderless: Floating Island (detail), 2011-2012, graphite, resin, steel, brass, color pigment, thread, 350 x 750 x 140 cm



Your Desire Became my Problem, 2013, brass, resin, color pigment, thread, 96 x 84 cm



Borderless, performance with Silvia Garis and Rebecca Russo at Centro Videoinight®, Turino, Italy, June 2013



Above and below: Sketches for *Fake and Real - Live Together Forever*, 2013, ink on paper, 30 x 42 cm



Above: *Fake and Real - Live Together Forever* (detail), 2013, imitation flowers, graphite, resin, color pigment, thread, 30 cm diameter x 120 cm
Following spread: *Memorial Landscape*, 2012-2013, acrylic, oil on wall, approximately 350 x 1500 cm, (Installation view of mural, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, Australia)

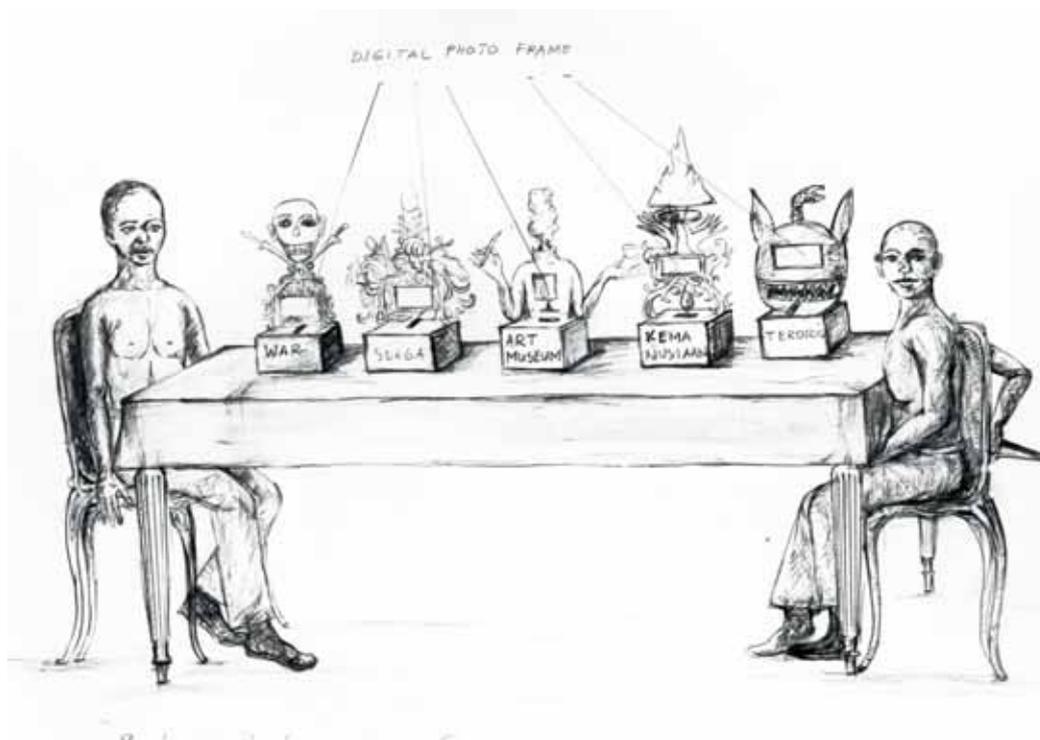






Borderless: Reclaim Landscape, 2013, oil on linen, 300 x 1000 cm (five panels)





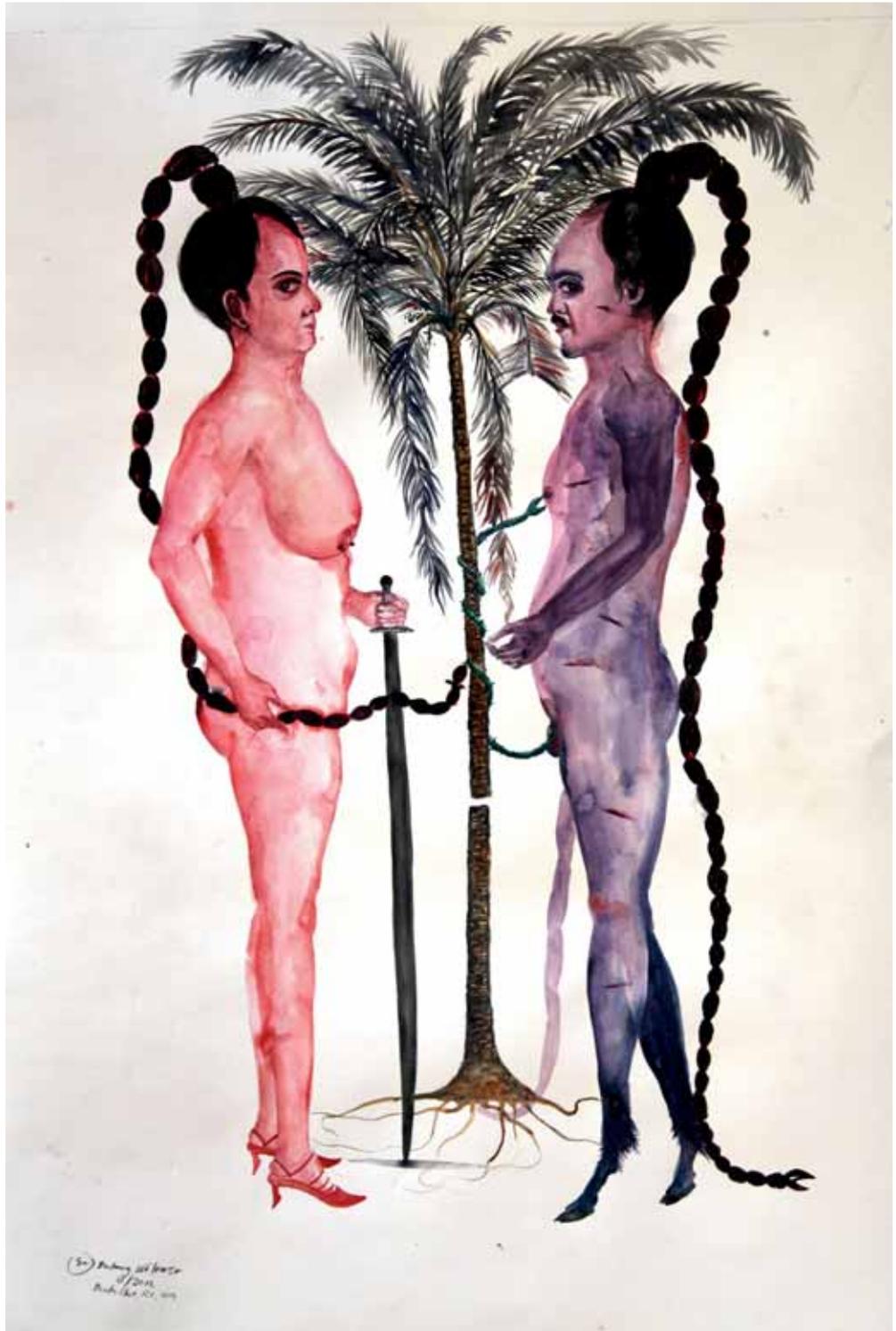
Above: *Undian Berhadiah*, 2012, graphite, resin, color pigment, thread, digital photo frame, electric cable, dimensions variable
 Below: Sketch for *Undian Berhadiah*, 2012, ink on paper, 30 x 40 cm



I Am Watching You, 2013, copper, thread, color pigment, resin, 87 x 122 cm



I Love You Too Much - Invisible Threat # 1-3, 2012, watercolor on paper, each 170 x 100 cm





Double Happiness #1, 2013, aluminum, resin, thread, color pigment, 93 x 250 cm



Above: *My Heart is Bigger than You Think*, 2013, aluminum, resin, thread, color pigment, 150 x 400 cm
Following spread: Exhibition View, *Trilogy*, ARNDT Singapore, March, 2014









Fig. 1



Fig. 2

ENTANG WIHARSO

Born in 1967, Tegal, Central Java, Indonesia
Lives and works in Rhode Island, USA and Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Education

Bachelors of Fine Art in Painting, Indonesian Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Solo Exhibitions

2014

- *Entang Wiharso*, Marc Straus Gallery, New York, NY, USA
- *Trilogy*, ARNDT, Singapore

2013

- *Geo-Portrait #2*, Galeri Salihara, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Geo-Portrait*, Primae Noctis, Lugano, Switzerland (catalogue)
- *Crush Me*, Pearl Lam Galleries, Shanghai, China (catalogue)
- *Re-Play #2*, Office for Contemporary Art International, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)

2012

- *Untold Stories*, ARNDT, Berlin, Germany (catalogue)

2011

- *Second Skin: Peeling Back the Layers*, Kalamazoo Institute of Art, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA (catalogue)
- *Love Me or Die*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy

2010

- *Love Me or Die*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)

2008

- *Black Goat is My Last Defense*, 5 Traverse Gallery, Providence, Rhode Island, USA (catalogue)
- *Black Goat*, The Drawing Room Contemporary Art, Manila, Philippines (catalogue)
- *Black Goat Space*, Ark Galerie, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *I Am Black Goat*, SMU Concourse, Singapore (catalogue)

2007

- *InToxic*, Rumah Seni Yaitu, Semarang, Indonesia (catalogue)

2006

- *Puppet Blues*, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Michigan, USA

2005

- *Inter-Eruption*, Bentara Budaya, Jakarta, Indonesia

2004

- *Sublime Tunnel*, Circle Point Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Hurting Landscape: Between Two Lines*, Gallery Agniel, Providence, Rhode Island, USA
- *Hurting Landscape*, Chouinard Gallery, Hong Kong (catalogue)

2001

- *NusaAmuk*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia and Nadi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia; Purna Budaya Art Center and Bentara Budaya Art Center, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- *Amuk*, CP ArtSpace, Washington D.C. USA (catalogue)

2000

- *Entang Wiharso*, Chouinard Gallery, Hong Kong (catalogue)
- *Melting Souls*, Gallery Agniel, Providence, Rhode Island, USA
- *Visit to Sacred Place: Cultural Interrogation*, Installation, Taman Martani, Indonesia

1999

- *Melting Souls*, Hewlett Gallery, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA (catalogue)
- *The New God Series*, Hunt-Cavanagh Gallery, Providence College, Providence, Rhode Island, USA (catalogue)
- *The New God Series and Ceremony of the Souls*, Java Gallery and Cemara 6 Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)

1998

- *Evidence on Earth*, CenterCity Contemporary Arts, Providence, Rhode Island, USA
- *Strange Journey*, Santi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

1997

- *Strange Journey*, Native Gallery, Providence, Rhode Island, USA

Biography and Exhibition History

- *Strange Journey*, Benteng Vrederburg Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 1996
- *Idea is Form*, National Gallery Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
 - *Idea is Form*, Purna Budaya Art Center, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- 1995
- *Conflict, Dreams and Tragedy*, Purna Budaya Art Center, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2013
- *The Encyclopedic Palace*, 55th Venice Biennale, Indonesian Pavilion, Arsenale, Venice, Italy (catalogue)
 - *Pressing*, Centro Videolnsight®, Turino, Italy (catalogue)
 - *Prague Biennale 6*, Prague, Czech Republic (catalogue)
 - *All You Need Is Love*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan (catalogue)
 - *Kindred by Choice I*, ARNDT, Singapore
 - *Locally Made*, RISD Museum of Art, Providence, RI, USA
 - *Souvenir*, Project by Lucie Fontaine, Perrotin Gallery, Paris, France
 - *Seeing Paintings: Conversations before the End of History*, Sangkring Art Space, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- 2012
- *2x2*, Eileen S. Kaminsky Family Foundation (ESKFF) at Mana Contemporary, Jersey City, NJ, USA
 - *Estate*, Project by Lucie Fontaine, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY, USA
 - *Panorama*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (catalogue)
 - *Migration*, Sidney/Melbourne, Australia, ARNDT, Berlin, Germany
 - *Insight*, Kuntraum, Vaduz, Lichtenstein
 - *Contemporary Indonesian Art*, Ben Brown Fine Art, London, England
 - *Chimera: the collectors show*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (catalogue)

- 2011
- *Beyond the East, Indonesian Contemporary Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art of Rome (MACRO), Rome, Italy, (catalogue)
 - *Asia: Looking South*, ARNDT, Berlin, Germany (catalogue)
 - *Closing the Gap*, Melbourne International Fine Art, Melbourne, Australia (catalogue)
 - *Installation Art: Indonesia*, Albertine Monroe - Brown Gallery, Richmond Art Centre, Western Michigan University, MI, USA
 - *Documenting Now*, APT Gallery, Indonesian Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- 2010
- *The Private Museum. The passion for contemporary art in the collections of Bergamo*, Galleria d' Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (GAMEC), Bergamo, Italy
 - *And_Writers*, 1st Nanjing Biennale, Jiangsu Provincial Art Museum, Nanjing, China (catalogue)
 - *Rainbow Asia*, Hangaram Art Museum of Seoul Arts Center, Seoul, Korea (catalogue)
 - *Pleasures of Chaos: Inside New Indonesian Art*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy (catalogue)
 - *Contemporaneity-Indonesian Contemporary Art*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Shanghai, China (catalogue)
 - *Vault Portrait Series*, New Bedford Art Museum, New Bedford, Massachusetts, USA (catalogue)
 - *The Birth of Colors*, Syang Art Space, Magelang, Indonesia (catalogue)
 - *Indonesian Art Now – The Strategies of Being*, ArtJog 2010, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
 - *Percakapan Masa*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
 - *Collectors' Turn*, Lawangwangi, Bandung, Indonesia (catalogue)
 - *Crossing and Blurring the Boundaries: Medium in Indonesian Contemporary Art*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
 - *Sign and After: Contemporary Islamic Art*, Lawangwangi, Bandung, Indonesia (catalogue)



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5

2009

- *Expanded Painting 3*, Prague Biennale 4, Prague, Czech Republic (catalogue)
- *A Transversal Collection: From Duchamp to Nino Calos, from Cattelan to Entang Wiharso*, Arte Contemporanea ALT - Arte Lavoro Territorio, Bergamo, Italy
- *Viewing and Viewing Points*, Second Asian Art Biennale, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan (catalogue)
- *Common Sense*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *South East Asia B(l)ooming*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy (catalogue)
- *Exposign*, JEC, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Jogja Jamming*, Jogja Biennale X, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Living Legends*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)

2008

- *Highlights from ISI*, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- *Self Portrait: Famous Living Artists of Indonesia*, Jogja Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- *E-motion*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia and Visual Art Magazine, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Manifesto*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *The Third Space: Cultural Identity Today*, Mead Art Museum, Amherst, US
- *Grounded in Space*, Eli Marsh Gallery, Amherst, MA, USA
- *A New Force of South East Asia*, Edwin Gallery - Asia Art Centre, Beijing, China (Catalogue)

2007

- *Wind from the East*, Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki, Finland (catalogue)
- *The Big Picture Show*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (catalogue)
- *The International Print Portfolio: Artists' Expression of Universal Human Rights*, Michigan State University Museum, Michigan, USA
- *Neo-Nation*, Yogyakarta Biennale XI, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)

- *2nd Open Terra Cotta Biennale*, Dumaguete, Philippines (catalogue)
- *Indonesian Contemporary Art Now*, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Fetish*, Biasa Art Space, Bali, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *(Un)Real*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

2006

- *Interpreting*, Semar Gallery, Malang, East Java, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Waging Peace*, Hera Gallery, Rhode Island, USA (catalogue)

2005

- *Actualizing Insight Virtuality*, Indonesian Pavilion, 51st Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (catalogue)
- *Taboo and Transgression*, Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, New York, USA (catalogue)
- *Second Beijing Biennale*, Beijing, China (catalogue)
- *Jakarta Biennale XIII*, Indonesia National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Urban/Culture*, CP Biennale, BI Building, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Discourse: Scope and Space*, Bali Biennale, Bali (catalogue)
- *Here and Now*, Yogyakarta Biennale VIII, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- *After the Affair Art Project*, Puri Art Gallery, Malang, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Olympiade*, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Still Life*, Raka Gallery, Bali, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Face*, Chouinard Gallery, Hong Kong
- *Disini akan Dibangun MALL*, Public Art Project, Bunderan Gajah Mada University and Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- *Barcode*, FKY, Yogyakarta Art Centre, TBY, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Reading the World of Widayat*, Museum H. Widayat, Magelang, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Wings of Color, Wings of Words*, Kyai Langgeng Art House, Magelang, Indonesia



Fig. 6



Fig. 7



Fig. 8

2003

- *Contemporary Perspectives: Highlights from the Singapore Art Museum Permanent Collection*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (brochure)
- *Passion: Etno-Identity*, traveling exhibition to Capital Library Gallery, Beijing, China; Leu Hai Su Art Museum, Shanghai, China; and Galeri Canna, Jakarta, Indonesia
- *Interpellation*, CP Open Biennale, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Five Years of Reform*, Dewan Kesenian Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Borobudur Budweiser*, Kyai Langgeng Art House, Magelang, Indonesia

2002

- *Eye Witness*, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Operasa*, Kyai Langgeng Art House, Magelang, Indonesia
- *Mata Hati Demokrasi*, Taman Budaya Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia
- *Reading Raden Saleh*, Semarang Gallery, Semarang, Indonesia (catalogue)

2001

- *Not I. Am I?*, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Not Just the Political*, Museum H. Widayat, Magelang, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *The Problematic Desire*, Casa de Cantabria, Madrid, Spain (catalogue)
- Modern Art Exhibition from the Archipelago: Works of 90 Artists from 20 Provinces, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *Reflection of Our Time*, One Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

2000

- *Indonesian Contemporary Art: A Cultural Journey*, Museum of Modern Art, Moscow, Russia (catalogue)
- *2nd Abstraction*, Andi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)
- *One Hundred Years of Modern Indonesian Art*, One Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia (catalogue)

Performances

2013

- *Borderless*, Centro Videoinsight®, Turino, Italy

2012

- *Being Guest*, Estate, a Project by Lucie Fontaine, Marianne Boesky Gallery, New York, NY, USA

2011

- *My Cake is Sweeter than My Neighbor's Cake*, Documenting Now, APT Gallery, Indonesian Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2010

- *Lost and Found*, Ciputra World Gallery, Jakarta
- *Don't be Afraid of Your Desire*, Casa Golinelli, Bologna, Italy

2009

- *Desire: Eating Identity*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy

2007

- *Eating Identity*, Mead Art Museum, Amherst, Massachusetts, USA
- *I Kill the Sign*, Rumah Seni Yaitu, Semarang, Indonesia
- *Your Pleasure is My Pleasure*, Rumah Seni Yaitu, Semarang, Indonesia
- *Being Javanese*, Rumah Seni Yaitu, Semarang, Indonesia

2006

- *Nude Within*, Gadani, Pakistan

2005

- *Behind Space: Forbidden Exotic Country*, 51st Venice Biennale, Italy

2004

- *Behind Space*, Puri Art Gallery, Malang, Indonesia
- *7 Senses: Wall of Nations Series*, Festival Kesenian Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2003

- *Buah Kuldi (Kuldi Fruit)*, Vaduz City and Tangente Gallery, Liechtenstein
- *Buah Kuldi: Kuldi Fruit Translation*, Warsawa, Sonosewu, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2002

- *Polluted by Norm*, Kyai Langgeng Art House, Magelang, Indonesia



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

2001

- *Kulahirkan untuk Tidak Menjadi Bebek (I Gave Birth Not to Be a Follower)*, collaboration with members of Pendopo Theater, Indonesian National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia; Bentara Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- *From Watermelon Country*, Pacific Bridge Contemporary Southeast Asian Art, Oakland, CA, USA
- *About Flag*, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, CA, USA

1994

- *Conflict, Dreams and Tragedy*, Yogyakarta Art Centre, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Awards, Residencies & Grants

2014

- Residency, Singapore Tyler Print Institute (STPI), Singapore

2013

- Art Sector Culture Award, Governor of Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- Residency and Grant, Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne, Australia

2007

- Copeland Fellowship, Amherst College, Amherst, MA, USA
- Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant, New York, USA

2006

- Vasl International Artists' Workshop, Karachi, Pakistan
- Ford Foundation Travel Grant, Jakarta Indonesia

2003

- Residency, Galerie Tangente, Eschen, Liechtenstein

1999

- Residency, Pacific Bridge Contemporary Southeast Asian Art, Oakland, CA, USA

1998

- Residency, CenterCity Contemporary Arts, Providence, RI, USA

1996

- Top Ten Painters, Indonesian Art Awards, Philip Morris Group of Companies and Indonesian Fine Art Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia

- Top 36 Indonesian Artists in 1996, Gatra Magazine, Indonesia

1995

- Top 100 Artists, Indonesian Art Awards, Philip Morris Group of Companies and the Indonesian Fine Art Foundation, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Best Artist Prize, Sultan's Palace, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

1994

- Juror's Award, 4th Yogyakarta Biennial Exhibition, Purna Budaya Art Center, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

1992

- Best Work, Annual Art Institute of Indonesia's Anniversary Art Competition, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- Best Painting, Art Institute of Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- Best Painting, Art Institute of Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

1988

- Best Painting, Art Institute of Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- First Prize, Yogyakarta Calligraphy Painting Competition, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- Best Still Life Drawing, Art Institute of Indonesia, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Speaking Engagements

2014

- *Southeast Asian Shows Go Global*, Art Stage Singapore 2014, Singapore

2013

- *Two Decades of Indonesian Contemporary Art*, Art Basel Hong Kong
- *Fish Table, Re-Play #2*, Office for Contemporary Art International, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- *Aesthetics*, Academic Seminar, Indonesian Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2012

- *Indonesian Pavilion*, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy
- *Indonesian Pavilion*, Yuz Museum, Jakarta, Indonesia
- *Artist Talk - All You Need is Love*, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

2011

- *Artist Talk - Documenting Now*, APT Gallery, Indonesian Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2010

- *Artist Talk - Love Me or Die*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
- *Artpreneurship*, Ciputra World Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

2008

- *Studio Practice*, Richmond Center for the Arts, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, USA
- *Becoming the Other*, NeoNation, Jogja Biennale, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2007

- *Cultural Identity Today*, Amherst College, Amherst, MA, USA
- *Intoxic, Exhibition Discussion*, Rumah Seni Yaitu, Semarang, Indonesia

2006

- *Toxic Art & Political Subjectivity: a conversation with Indonesian artist Entang Wiharso*, Asia Center, Harvard University, Boston, MA, USA
- *Voices from the Stomach*, Amherst College, Amherst, MA, USA
- *Voices from the Stomach*, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, USA
- *Artist Talk*, VM Gallery (ZVMG Rangoowala Trust), Karachi, Pakistan
- Graduate Program, Indonesian Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2005

- Yogyakarta Biennale VIII, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2004

- Harvard University, Boston, MA, USA

2002

- Gelaran Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

2001

- Indonesian National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

1999

- San Francisco Museum of Asian Art, San Francisco, California, USA

- Carnegie Mellon University, Hewlett Gallery, Pittsburgh, USA
- Providence College, Hunt-Cavanagh Gallery, Providence, USA
- Cemara 6 Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

Public and Private Collections

- Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
- Centro Videoinight®, Turino, Italy
- Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine, USA
- Guy & Myriam Ullens Foundation, Switzerland
- Indonesian Art Institute, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- MaGMA Collection, Singapore
- Marino and Paola Golinelli, Bologna, Italy
- Mariyah Gallery, Dumaguete City, Philippines
- Mead Art Museum, Amherst, Massachusetts, USA
- Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
- National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia
- OHD Museum of Modern & Contemporary Indonesian Art, Magelang, Indonesia
- Olbricht Collection, Germany
- RISD Museum, Providence, Rhode Island, USA
- The Rubell Family Collection, Miami, Florida, USA
- Rudi Akili Museum, Jakarta, Indonesia
- Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
- Singapore Management University, Singapore
- Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- The Tiroche DeLeon Collection and Art Vantage PCC Limited
- University of Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia

Syamsul Barry is a lecturer and visual artist. Previously on the teaching staff of the Graduate School of the Indonesian Art Institute of Yogyakarta from 2004-2010, he is currently a professor in the Television and Film Studies Program, Indonesian College of Arts in Bandung since 2011. In 1999 he was one of the founders of Taring Padi, an influential underground political art collective based in Yogyakarta. A frequent author, his book *Yogyakarta Street Art* (Jalan Seni Jalanan Yogyakarta) was published by the Graduate School of the Indonesian Art Institute of Yogyakarta and Penerbit Stadium in 2008.

Christine E. Cocca is a curator and art conservation specialist. Since 2000 she has been Director of Antena Projects, Yogyakarta where she manages the Black Goat Studios Collection, is project coordinator and curator of the annual Yogyakarta Open Studios and has edited and published books and catalogues including *NusaAmuk* (Antena Projects, Yogyakarta, 2001); *Hurting Landscape* (Antena Projects, Yogyakarta, 2002); and *Love Me or Die* (Galeri Canna Publishing, Jakarta, 2010). Cocca was co-director of the 7th Yogyakarta Biennale (2003), co-curated *Re.Claim* at the Indonesian National Gallery, Jakarta (2012) and was a member of the Board of Directors, Yogyakarta Biennale Foundation from 2010-2014.

Nirwan Dewanto is a writer, editor and curator based in Jakarta, Indonesia. He has published, among others, two books of poetry, *Jantung Lebah Ratu* (2008) and *Buli-Buli Lima Kaki* (2010), both of which received the Equator Literature Prize. He has written numerous reviews of literature, the performing arts and the visual arts. He curated or co-curated, among others, the solo exhibitions of S. Teddy Darmawan, Entang Wiharso and Hanafi. He also writes lyrics for pop songs, jazz and *keroncong*.

Rifky Effendy is a curator and writer based in Bandung, Indonesia. In 2001 he established and directed the 1st Bandung Biennale, and in 2004 became a grantee of the Asian Cultural Council in New York. In 2009 he co-founded the Jakarta Contemporary Ceramics Biennale and along with fellow curators and artists, established the Bandung-based art space Platform3. In 2010 he formed Inkubatorasia, a Jakarta-based space dedicated to promoting emerging contemporary artists. He has edited and contributed to several publications including *Tempo*, *Visual Arts*, and *Art Asia Pacific* magazines as well as Indonesia's newspaper of record, *Kompas*. Effendy's recent curatorial projects include *FLOW: Contemporary Art from Indonesia*, Michael Janssen Gallery, Berlin (2012); *Fixer*, North Art Space, Jakarta, Indonesia (2010); and *Southeast Asia B(L)ooming*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy (2008). In 2013 he was the curator of the Indonesia Pavilion at the 55th Venice Biennale. He is now working as co-curator and artistic director of the 3rd Jakarta Contemporary Ceramics Biennale 2014.

Asikin Hasan is a writer as well as Curator at Galeri Salihara in Jakarta since 2008. From 1991-1994 he worked as a journalist for *Tempo* (West Java Bureau) until the magazine was banned by Indonesia's New Order government. He then moved to the weekly news magazine *Forum Justice* where he worked from 1994-1996. In 1996 he became curator at Papyrus Gallery, Jakarta. In the same

Contributors

year the Japan Foundation sponsored him in a curator short course at galleries and museums in Tokyo, Hiroshima, Fukuoka and Kyoto. Hasan edited the book *Dua Seni Rupa; Sepilihan Tulisan Sanento Yuliman* (2001). He was curator for *Sculpture Triennial*, Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (1997); *TRANSIT*, Townsville, Brisbane and Darwin, Australia; *Biennale 11, Contemporary Art*, Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (2007); and co-curator for *Enchanted Shadow*, a project of the Indonesian National Gallery, in Washington, D.C. (2013). Hasan is an art reviewer for *Kompas*, *The Jakarta Post* and *Tempo*.

Natalie King is a curator, writer and Senior Research Fellow, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne, Australia. She has curated exhibitions for numerous museums including the Singapore Art Museum, National Museum of Art, Osaka, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tjibaou Cultural Centre, New Caledonia, Bangkok Art and Culture Centre and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. King is co-editor of the anthology *Art in the Asia Pacific: Intimate Publics*, Routledge, 2014. She has conducted interviews with Ai Wei Wei, Joseph Kosuth, Massimiliano Gioni, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Tacita Dean, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Bill Henson, Jitish Kallat, Hou Hanru and Cai Guo-Qiang among others. King is on the editorial board of *Art and Australia* and a correspondent for *Flash Art International* as well as a contributor to *Artlink*, *Eyeline*, *LEAP* (China) and *Art Asia Pacific*. In 2014, she will co-curate the *TarraWarra Biennial* and the 13th International Photo Festival at the Dong Gang Museum of Photography, Korea.

Dr. Amanda Katherine Rath has been researching and writing about contemporary art from Southeast Asia, with an emphasis on Indonesia and Malaysia, for the past fifteen years. She curated the exhibition *Taboo and Transgression: Contemporary Art from Indonesia* held at the Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Ithaca, New York in 2005. It was one of the first group exhibitions of contemporary art from Indonesia to be held in New York. Dr. Rath relocated from Malaysia to Frankfurt, Germany, and is currently a fellow at the Department of Southeast Asian Studies, and lecturer at the Department of Art History at the University of Frankfurt.

Dr. Helena Spanjaard is a Dutch art historian based in Amsterdam. Since 1980 she has been active in the field of modern and contemporary Indonesian painting as a writer, researcher and curator of several exhibitions including *Indonesian Modern Art since 1945*, De Oude Kerk, Amsterdam (1993) and *Reformasi Indonesia!*, Museum Nusantara, Delft (2000). Her dissertation, *The Ideal of Modern Indonesian Painting: The Creation of a National Cultural Identity, 1900-1995* was published in 1998 by Leiden University. Besides numerous articles, her publications include the monograph *Widayat, the Magical Mysticism of a Modern Indonesian Artist* (Museum H. Widayat, 1998); *Modern Indonesian Painting* (Sotheby's, 2003); *Exploring Modern Indonesian Art; the Collection of Dr. Oei Hong Djien* (Singapore: SNP International, 2004); *Pioneers of Balinese Painting: The Rudolf Bonnet Collection* (KIT Publishers, Amsterdam, 2007); *Indonesian Odyssey* (Equinox, 2008); and *The Dono Code* (KIT Publishers, Amsterdam, 2009).

Jim Supangkat is an internationally acknowledged independent curator and art critic who has written several books including *Indonesian Modern and Beyond* (1996) and *Mutation: Painstaking Realism in Indonesian Contemporary Painting* (1997). Supangkat is a strong and influential figure in promoting, analyzing and interpreting contemporary Southeast Asian art, especially Indonesia contemporary art. Supangkat received the 1997 Prince Claus Award from the Dutch government for his efforts in promoting Indonesian contemporary art. Since 1990, he has curated or co-curated over 35 shows and in 2010 was the curator for the exhibition *Contemporaneity - Indonesian Contemporary Art* at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA), Shanghai, China.

Alia Swastika is a curator and writer based in Yogyakarta. She started her curatorial career at Cemeti Art House as the artistic manager and later developed Ark Galerie, both in Yogyakarta. In 2011 she was curator of the Jogja Biennale XI, Indonesia along with Suman Gopinath (India) and in 2012 was appointed one of the artistic directors of Gwangju Biennale, South Korea. She curates many projects connecting the Indonesian art scene with international platforms and actively writes for many publications with an international and national scope.

Nicola Trezzi is an editor based in New York. Since 2005 he has been an employee at Giancarlo Politi Editore in Milan and Nadace Prague Biennale Foundation, Prague, where he serves as editor, and curator and exhibition coordinator for the Prague Biennale (2007, 2009, 2011, 2013). He is currently US editor at *Flash Art International* where he has worked on special covers featuring Fia Backström, Claire Fontaine, Sterling Ruby, Art & Language and Gerwald Rockenschaub. He also works on the New York desk at *Flash Art Italia*, and is associate editor at *Flash Art CZ&SK* and consulting editor at *Flash Art HU*. His writings appeared in *Il Sole 24 Ore* (Milan), *Monopol* (Berlin), *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (Milan) and *Flatt* (New York). Trezzi has lectured at Yale University (New Haven), NABA (Milan), iCI (New York), Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design (Tel Aviv) and the Indonesian Institute of the Art (Yogyakarta). He co-organized the following exhibitions: *Painting Overall* at the Prague Biennale 5; *Four Rooms* at the CCA, Warsaw; *Modern Talking* at the Muzeul National de Arta Cluj-Napoca; and *Circa 1986* at HVCCA, Peekskill.

Suwarno Wisetrotomo is an art critic, independent curator and a lecturer at the Indonesian Art Institute of Yogyakarta in the Department of Fine Art while currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Gadjah Mada University. He writes art criticism for major media outlets and is active curating exhibitions in Indonesia and abroad. Wisetrotomo was the assistant vice committee chair for culture of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (2008-2013), is currently editorial advisor for *The Journal of Asian Arts and Aesthetics* and has been a speaker at numerous international conferences including: the 2nd Beijing International Art Biennale Conference, 2005; The 4th International Aesthetic Conference, Bali in 2006; The 5th International Aesthetic Conference, Retsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan in 2007; The 6th International Conference of the Asian Society of Art, Taipei, Taiwan; and the Asian Art Curators' Forum, Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China in 2013.



Fence Chronicles, 2010, aluminum plate, steel, car paint, polyurethane, 500 x 1500 cm

Front Cover: *Perfect Mirror*, 2013-2014, oil color on mirror, aluminum, resin, color pigment, thread, 220 x 330 cm

Endpapers front: Exhibition view *Trilogy*, ARNDT, Singapore, 2014

Endpapers back: Various sketches, 2004-2014, mixed media, dimensions variable

Page 300, Fig. 1: *Love Me or Die* exhibition opening, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, 2010; Fig. 2: Studio Entang Wiharso, Pawtucket, RI

Page 302, Fig. 3: *Untold Stories* opening, dinner, Berlin, Germany, 2012; Fig. 4: Painting mural at Albertine Monroe - Brown Gallery, Richmond Art Centre, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI, 2011; Fig. 5: Studio Wim Delvoye, Ghent, Belgium, 2012

Page 303, Fig. 6: Studio Entang Wiharso, Yogyakarta, Indonesia; Fig. 7: *Art Stage Singapore* collector's tour, Black Goat Studios, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2012; Fig. 8: *Untold Stories* opening, dinner, Berlin, Germany, 2012

Page 304, Fig. 9: *Being Guest* performance, Estate, Mariane Boesky Gallery, New York, NY, 2012; Fig. 10: *Art Stage Singapore*

collector's tour, Black Goat Studios, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2012; Fig. 11: Discussion forum, *Love Me or Die*, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, 2010

Page 305, Fig. 12: Planning with Galeri Canna for *Love Me or Die*, Black Goat Studios, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2010; Fig. 13: *Desire: Eating Identity* performance, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy, 2009; Fig. 14: *Untold Stories* opening, Berlin, Germany, 2012

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Photograph Credits
 studionoMADEN, Yogyakarta: 10-11, 34, 36-37, 40-41, 58-59, 73, 74-75, 87, 148, 152, 153, 154, 158-159, 162, 163, 169, 172-173, 174, 177, 178, 179, 184, 187, 188-189, 191, 194, 196-197, 199, 202-203, 224, 229, 232-233, 244, 247, 248-249, 258, 259, 260-261, 263, 266, 268-269, 270-271, 272-

273, 274, 275, 279, 288-289.
 Agus Wuryanto, Wonosobo: 84
 Edial Rusli, Yogyakarta: 49, 68, 69, 82-83, 84-85, 148, 171
 Lim Sin Thai: 2-3
 Jake Walker: 275, 286-287
 Fendry Ekel: 26-29
 Olivia Kwok: 6-7, 52-53, 291
 Gembong Hardian: 12-13, 206-207, 208-209, 212, 213, 214-215, 216
 Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki: 80-81
 King Foto, Jakarta: 56-57, 88-91, 93, 176
 Karen Philippi, Providence: 128-129, 144, 304 (Fig. 9)
 Bernd Borchardt: 147, 180, 181, 190, 192-193, 281
 Charles Quigg: 225
 Pearl Lam Galleries, Shanghai: 226-227

Courtesy
 Gertrude Contemporary, Melbourne: 275, 286-287
 Bumi Purnati Indonesia: 12-13, 206-207, 208-209, 212, 213, 214-215, 216
 Collection of Jean Marc Decrop, Paris and Hong Kong: 34, 229, 244
 The artist and ARNDT Berlin/Singapore: 6-7, 38-39, 52-53,

60-61, 147, 155, 192-193, 200-201, 281, 288-289, 291
 ARNDT Berlin/Singapore: 180, 181
 Private Collection, Israel and Primo Marella Gallery: 40-41
 Private collection, Australia: 46-47
 Private Collection, Hong Kong: 54
 Iniala Art Collection at Iniala Beach House, Thailand: 55, 151
 Prasodjo Winarko, Jakarta: 93, 174, 176, 254-255, 264
 OHD Museum, Magelang, Indonesia: 84-85
 Mead Art Museum, Amherst: 112, 225
 Singapore Art Museum collection: 132-133, 136-137
 Tommy Sutomo and Inge Santoso, Jakarta: 140-141
 Centro Videoinight®, Torino, Italy: 194
 Guy & Myriam Ullens Foundation, Switzerland: 158-159, 195
 Primo Marella Gallery: 217
 Private Collection, Surabaya: 162, 172-173
 Collection of Jean Marc Decrop, Paris and Hong Kong: 169, 202-203
 The Rubell Family Collection, Miami and Primo Marella Gallery: 179
 Mr. Junior Tirtadji, Jakarta: 184

Credits and Permission

Private Collection, New York, USA: 188-189
Private Collection, USA: 199
Galeri Salihara, Jakarta: 218-219, 298-299
Prima Noctis, Lugano: 220
Pearl Lam Galleries, Shanghai: 221
Private Collection: Photo: 270-271
Mori art Museum, Tokyo: 292-293
Tom Tandio, Jakarta: 265
Olbricht Collection, Germany: 267
Private Collection, Italy and Primo Marella Gallery: 266
PRIVATE COLLECTION – Bologna – Italy: 166

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