

QAG

INDO POP
INDONESIAN ART
FROM APT7



GOMA

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Over the last decade, Indonesia has emerged as one of the most exciting new contemporary art centres of the world, fostering a diverse range of artists and establishing the largest contemporary art market in South-East Asia. Throughout the country's turbulent history of the late twentieth century, contemporary artists in Indonesia have banded together to challenge social, political, and economic structures, as well as the arts establishment. In the late 2000s, the market experienced a dramatic boom, changing the platform for artists and making it one of the contemporary art capitals in Asia and a place for the world to watch for new styles and expressions. 'Indo Pop: Indonesian Art from APT7' presents a young generation of artists at the forefront of the new contemporary arts landscape, whose works are characterised by a passion for popular culture, a pointed wit, an embrace of new media and approach to production that has established a unique arts community. The works in this exhibition were a central feature of QAGOMA's seventh Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, and are drawn from the Gallery's Collection, which holds one of the most significant collections of contemporary Indonesian art in the world.

Australia and Indonesia's relationship has developed over centuries. In addition to social, economic and political ties, we are also bonded physically and historically, with the eastern provinces of Indonesia lying closer to parts of Queensland than Australia's capital, and a story of trade and exchange that far precedes Australia's colonial history. Indigenous Australians were trading with people of the Indonesian archipelago through the thriving Macassan trepang (sea cucumber) industry possibly

centuries before white settlement, exchanging cultures that were recorded in rock art by Indigenous artists. We have since become tied through social engagement and industry, negotiating bilateral agreements, becoming major trading partners and living side by side, with around 65 000 Indonesians currently residing in Australia.¹ Since 1950, Australia has hosted significant numbers of Indonesian students under the Colombo Plan. Now, 17 000 Indonesians study in Australia each year and many senior Indonesian politicians are alumni of Australian universities. The works in this exhibition convey ideas that resonate with both Indonesians and Australians, exploring colonialism, migration, ethnicity, environmentalism and consumerism, as well as the influence of popular culture, music and urban art forms. Yet while we might relate easily to our neighbours to the north, it is important to note that Indonesia, along with its growing contemporary arts industry, is very much shaped by its own recent history.

Referred to as the post-Reformation generation, the artists in this exhibition grew up under the military-controlled government of President Suharto, who ruled Indonesia for 31 years. Under his 'New Order' regime, artists and activists struggled to find a voice for their concerns, and with an authoritarian reign that extended to murder and corruption, few could draw attention to serious commentary on sociopolitical issues. As the Suharto government toppled during the financial crisis of 1997–98, artists began creating a wave of work that reflected the violence of the former government and the ongoing struggles of establishing a fair, democratic system.

LEFT

Tintin Wulia / Indonesia/Australia
b.1972 / *Microstudy of Wanton*
2008 / Two-channel synchronised
video installation: 1:43 minutes,
colour, sound, ed. 3/5 / Purchased
2011. Queensland Art Gallery
Foundation / Collection: Queensland
Art Gallery

Rebellion and revolt has permeated the development of contemporary art in Indonesia. In 1974, groups of young artists and students protested against the presentation of 'Pameran Besar Seni Lukis Indonesia' ('Grand Exhibition of Indonesian Painting'), claiming it represented the stagnated institution of art in the country, and that prizes were awarded solely to senior artists of the establishment. In the late 1970s, young artists from Bandung and Yogyakarta banded together to create the Gerakan Seni Rupa Baru Indonesia (Indonesian New Art Movement) in reaction to the existing arts infrastructure.² The internationalisation of Indonesian art was then fostered in the 1990s, and these developments under the regime inspired works with sociopolitical content, which became a distinguishing feature between the country's contemporary art and other forms of local art.³

The strong social and political stance of the artists practising in the late 1990s gradually took on a different character. As the younger generation matured, a palpable sense of political activism continued, but this was expressed in new and experimental ways — often using the tools of the digital and global information-sharing age to make references to international popular culture — and artists tended to appeal to the weird, funny or absurd to represent sociopolitical matters.⁴ In the 2000s, the contemporary art market also gained momentum, contributing to an evolving arts industry.

The Indonesian contemporary art boom was most potent in 2007, when it broke sales records for South-East Asian art, tripling its market value of the previous year.⁵ Young artists were suddenly in great demand: however, this was driven by auction houses and art fairs in Singapore and Hong Kong. An ongoing lack of institutions and public support in Indonesia resulted in unstable infrastructure with unpredictable variables along with a lack of discourse. This situation motivated artists to be resourceful and supportive of one another by developing urban and community-driven initiatives, and establishing alternative spaces and collaborative groups. Artists have increasingly come to find subjects and platforms in their immediate surroundings and express their ideas with localised energy, maintaining scepticism for the sudden commercialisation of their field. Armed with a different set of art-making tools than their predecessors, these younger artists have developed a new vernacular, favouring wit and parody rather than straight-faced

LEFT

Uji Handoko Eko Saputro
(aka Hahan) / Indonesia b.1983 /
The Journey 2011 / Synthetic
polymer paint on canvas /
Purchased 2011. Queensland Art
Gallery Foundation / Collection:
Queensland Art Gallery



critique, drawing on urban and popular culture rather than national idioms, and creating works in a range of everyday and commercial materials rather than those of conventional art practice. As artist, curator and writer Asmudjo Jono Irianto notes:

One of the post-Reformation young artists' greatest influences is the industry of popular culture. Lo-brow tendencies in the form of comics, illustrations, graffiti and advertising are quite 'fashionable' with young artists now.⁷

Like previous generations, the artistic communities in Indonesia today remain tight-knit in a country where contemporary artists have always struggled for platforms, and the cities of Bandung and Yogyakarta continue to be the centres for young artistic communities, fostered by their local art schools. 'Indo Pop: Indonesian Art from APT7' represents a new era in contemporary Indonesian art, showcasing artists working in a post-boom, democratic, multi-ethnic and globalised consumer society, who explore ideas important to their own culture and community.

Uji Handoko Eko Saputro (aka Hahan) challenges and comments on the effects of Indonesia's art boom and the rollercoaster ride of the international art market. He is a founding member of ACE House Collective, a group that shares the following principle: 'We believe in popular culture as the main source of resistance and in the work. And a response to the development of information flow in the global art discourse'.⁸ Somewhat caught up in the contemporary art boom himself, Hahan



characterises and sympathises with art world figures, from the bling-wearing, money-hungry art collector to the passionate and struggling young artist forced to overcome the many hurdles of the art world. With a comic-book style and a commercial finish, his wild characters inhabit fantasy worlds that become metaphors for the art system he is part of. His vivid colours and monstrous figures fill compositions that emerge somewhere between depictions of hell and playful street murals, while his sculptures caricature the echelons of the art world — from the rich collector and the institutionalised curator to the dazzled artist, balancing like a blow-up toy about to topple.

Fellow Yogyakarta artist Wedhar Riyadi also creates wild and crazed characters to make sociopolitical statements. While comical and absurd figures have defined the styles of many acclaimed Indonesian artists, such as Heri Dono, Agung Kurniawan and Eko Nugroho, Riyadi has developed his own unique way of working figuratively. In 'Keributan Dari Negara Subur' ('Noise from a fertile land' series), he creates fantastical veils over images that he has painted in large-scale photorealism. Re-creating and adapting vintage photographic portraits from the 1950s and 60s, which he finds at markets, and fascinated by the mix of Javanese, European and Chinese costumes, he conjures Indonesia's multicultural history. Riyadi's comic-style renderings feature sticks, rocks, daggers and *tuyul* (a mythical creature conjured through black magic) to convey the violence of the history that the photographs have survived. The paintings are a medley of history and fantasy, of realism and imagination, forged by the artist's upbringings, surroundings,

and a 'childhood surrounded by Java's culture . . . consuming a lot of television shows including cartoons, sci-fi, horror and action shows, as well as imported comics, anime and manga'.⁹

Yogyakarta-based photographer Edwin Roseno harnesses emblems of consumerism in a project that melds global commercial products with local environments and community exchange. Inspired by the basic human needs of eating and drinking, Roseno embarked on an ambitious project, marrying discarded consumer packaging with a variety of plants used for food or medicine. With the slickness of an advertising campaign, the images present a range of dichotomies, balancing the mass-produced with the natural, the global with the local, and the sustainable with the disposable. The series not only invites audiences to contemplate where food comes from and how it functions economically, but also the aesthetic balance of a natural, living object, with a globally marketed, commercially manufactured brand.

Febie Babyrose, Herbert Hans Maruli and Ruddy Alexander Hatumena formed the collective Tromarama while they were students at the Bandung Institute of Technology. The group chose the name as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the traumatic experience they shared creating their first music video. Using video and animation, the group draw from their surroundings to create works that comment on social and political conditions with an ironic, imaginative wit and a DIY aesthetic. *Wattt?! 2010* was created in response to an exorbitant electricity bill the group received. Imagining the explanation to be that the lights were

RIGHT

Edwin Roseno / Indonesia b.1979 /
Green hypermarket (series) 2011–12
Digital prints on aluminium,
ed. 1/5 / Gift of the artist through
the Queensland Art Gallery
Foundation 2013 / Collection:
Queensland Art Gallery



having a party when everyone was asleep, a stop-motion soiree meanders through their house and welcomes the neighbours to join in. Another animation, *Happy hour* 2010, is based on the banknotes in the centre of a bank bailout scandal. Imagining the notes to have been stressed by the ordeal, the group thought they deserved a 'happy hour' during which they could have a drink, sing karaoke and have some fun.

Border control and the movement of people are at the centre of Tintin Wulia's work, originally inspired by her own family history, but also relevant to Australia's current relationship with Indonesia. Passports feature prominently in her works — a symbol that is very personal yet connotes collective belonging, and which both permits and restricts. The ambiguities of national identity are particularly poignant for Wulia, who grew up in Bali before moving to Java, and then studied in the United States and Australia. Like many Indonesians of Chinese heritage, her family suffered discrimination in Indonesia, having lived under Dutch rule, Japanese occupation, and throughout the dramatic social changes of Independence. She is now an artist who stages projects worldwide but calls Brisbane home. *Microstudy for Wanton* 2008 presents a metaphor for the movement of people, where the screen fills with mosquitos, some contained in a flask and unable to 'migrate' beyond the border, while others fly free. One by one, a passport enters the frame and squashes a mosquito, as if it were a government official denying the passage of a traveller. Wulia's work is informed by her own experience of migration and geopolitics as a multinational citizen and the impact this has regarding questions of identity and freedom.

The Gallery's Asia Pacific Triennial was one of the first exhibitions in the world to make a commitment to showing contemporary art from Indonesia. As Indonesian author and critic Enin Supriyanto has described it, the APT is:

... generally recognised as one of the significant events in the nineties that changed the global contemporary art map by including art practices within the Asia Pacific region in a special position.¹⁰

Showing nine Indonesian artists in the inaugural APT exhibition in 1993, and surveying the majority of the country's prominent figures over the subsequent 20 years, the Gallery has also collaborated with Indonesia's most noted curators and commentators. APT7 continued this commitment as a special focus to celebrate its twentieth anniversary, and included some of the promising young talent from a new generation beginning to redefine Indonesia's front line of contemporary practice. Many of these works were created by the artists specifically for APT7 and joined Queensland's vast state collection, which maintains a long-standing aim of representing our neighbours in the Asia Pacific region.

Tarun Nagesh, Associate Curator, Asian Art, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art.

ENDNOTES

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- 3 Asmudjo Jono Irianto, 'Eyeing Indonesian Contemporary Art' in Serenella Ciclitira (ed.), *Indonesian Eye: Contemporary Indonesian Art*, Skira, Milan, 2011, pp.24–5.
- 4 Enin Supriyanto, 'Indonesian Contemporary Art: Becoming Contemporary, Becoming Global', in Arndt, 2012, p.13.
- 5 Santy Saptari, 'The roles of private industry in the creation and development of art in Indonesia', in *Closing the Gap* [exhibition catalogue], Melbourne International Fine Art Gallery, Melbourne, 2011, pp.22–3.
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- 8 ACE House Collective (website), <http://acehousecollective.com/>, accessed 27 February 2015.
- 9 Wedhar Riyadi, cited in Serenella Ciclitira (ed.), *Indonesian Eye: Contemporary Indonesian Art*, Skira Editore, Milan, Italy, 2011, p.228.
- 10 Supriyanto, 2012, p.11.

WEDHAR RIYADI | INDONESIA B.1980
*NOISE FROM THE FERTILE LAND (KERIBUTAN DARI
NEGARA SUBUR) NO.3 2012*

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

In his 2012 painting *Noise from the Fertile Land (Keributan dari negara subur) no.3*, Wedhar Riyadi depicts an Indonesian family in European-style clothing, rendered in sombre grey tones. Based on a historical photograph, the faces and torsos have been overlaid with cartoonish, grotesque forms. This dramatic contrast is characteristic of Riyadi's practice, which draws heavily on pop-cultural forms including sci-fi, comics, manga and anime to represent the impact of modernisation and stories of violence over the period the photographs have survived. By combining photorealistic painting techniques with fantastical, brightly coloured motifs, Riyadi's work reflects the rapid social, economic and political changes experienced by Indonesia over the past two decades.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Wedhar Riyadi was born in 1980 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the Indonesian Institute of Art in 2007. Riyadi's wide ranging practice encompasses drawings, murals, comics, stickers, posters, illustrations, and limited-edition toys and clothing, in addition to large-scale oil paintings such as the work featured in 'Indo Pop: Indonesian Art from APT7'. In this way, Riyadi represents a generation of Indonesian artists whose works defy the traditional boundaries of fine art and popular culture.

Riyadi's work has been included in a number of major group exhibitions throughout Asia, including 'Jogja Biennale XI', Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2011; 'The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art', Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane, Australia; and 'Everyday Life: 2013 Asian Art Biennial', National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, Taiwan.

Wedhar Riyadi / Indonesia b.1980 /
*Noise from the fertile land (Keributan dari negara
subur) no. 3 2012 / Oil on canvas / Purchased
2012. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation /
Collection: Queensland Art Gallery*



CONCEPTS

Wedhar Riyadi is from a generation of Indonesian artists who came of age in the late 1990s, during the turmoil of the Asian financial crisis, the fall of the Suharto regime and the country's subsequent transition to democracy, which was riddled with ethnic and religious tensions. He draws heavily on comics and associated subcultures, as well as the anti-establishment aesthetic of Indonesian street culture to critique the country's modernisation over the past two decades.

QUESTIONS/FOR DISCUSSION

- What stylistic differences can you see between the original photograph and the overlaid painting?
- What aspects of history is the artist manipulating through his reworking of these old photographs? What new meanings are created?

EDWIN ROSENO | INDONESIA B.1979
'GREEN HYPERMARKET'
SERIES 2011-12

ABOUT THE ARTWORK

In the series 'Green hypermarket' 2011-12, Indonesian artist Edwin Roseno photographed plants borrowed from friends and local nurseries, which he re-planted in containers made from discarded food packaging. By juxtaposing the detritus of global food production with medicinal and edible plant life, Roseno highlights the complex and interconnected relationship between the manufactured and the natural worlds.

Food security has become an issue of global importance, especially for developing countries such as Indonesia, where a rapidly growing population and powerful, modern economy have placed enormous pressures on traditional farming and other food production methods. In 'Green hypermarket', however, Roseno suggests that the natural world will ultimately outlast the manufactured, consumer products of our time.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Edwin Roseno was born in 1979 in Banyuwangi, East Java. He first studied product design before moving onto photography at the Indonesian Institute of Fine Arts in Yogyakarta, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in 2008. Working primarily in photography but also in video, Roseno's work has been the subject of solo exhibitions including 'Beyond Coca-Cola', Ruang MES 56, Yogyakarta (2005); and 'Frozen City', Kedai Kebun Forum, Yogyakarta (2009).

Roseno has been actively involved in the artists' collective Ruang Mes 56 in Yogyakarta, which has played an important role in the development and exhibition of contemporary photography in Indonesia. 'Green Hypermarket' featured in its entirety as part of 'The 7th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art'.

Edwin Roseno / Indonesia b.1979 /
Green hypermarket (series) 2011-12
Digital prints on aluminium, ed. 1/5 /
Gift of the artist through the Queensland
Art Gallery Foundation 2013 / Collection:
Queensland Art Gallery



CONCEPTS

Edwin Roseno's 'Green hypermarket' series emphasises the importance of sustainable food production. The economic and environmental effects of global food production and consumption include environmental degradation, unsafe agricultural and livestock practices, labour exploitation and wealth inequality.

The photographs comprising the series have the appearance of a slick advertising campaign, reinforced by the familiarity of many of the multinational food brands visible in the images. They also have a relationship to Pop art, such as Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup paintings. Their affinity with advertising and popular culture also recalls the Indonesian New Art Movement of the 1970s, widely recognised as the starting point for contemporary art in Indonesia.

QUESTIONS/FOR DISCUSSION

- Do you recognise any brands on the tins, bottles and containers in the 'Green hypermarket' series?
- Research to identify which of the world's leading brands and companies contribute to the environment's destruction. In what ways could their impact be reduced or eliminated?

QAGOMA develops education resources for selected exhibitions and works from the gallery's Collection. For more information, please visit: www.qagoma.qld.gov.au



TOUR VENUES

Noosa Regional Gallery

11 June – 19 July 2015

Logan Art Gallery

31 July – 12 September 2015

Redcliffe City Art Gallery

10 December 2015 – 30 January 2016

Gold Coast City Art Gallery

6 February – 27 March 2016

Gympie Regional Art Gallery

7 April – 28 May 2016

Rockhampton Art Gallery

4 June – 17 July 2016

Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery

24 August – 16 October 2016

Artspace Mackay

21 October – 4 December 2016

Perc Tucker Regional Art Gallery

27 January – 19 March 2017

Dogwood Crossing Miles

6 April – 28 May 2017

Gladstone Regional Art Gallery & Museum

3 June – 23 July 2017

Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery

3 August – 24 September 2017

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COVER

Uji Handoko Eko Saputro (aka Hahan) / Indonesia b.1983 / *The New Prophet* (from 'Trinity' series) 2011 / Polyester resin and air brush, ed. 1/2 / Purchased 2011. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

ABOVE

TROMARAMA / Indonesia est. 2004 / *Wattt?! 2010* / Single-channel stop motion video animation: 5:48 minutes, colour, sound, ed. of 5, AP 1/3 / Music: Kulan / Purchased 2011. Queensland Art Gallery Foundation / Collection: Queensland Art Gallery

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TOURING

The Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art provides a program of touring exhibitions and related services to regional Queensland.