

RALLY

CONTEMPORARY INDONESIAN ART
JOMPET KUSWIDANANTO
& EKO NUGROHO

ngv
National
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Victoria

JOMPET KUSWIDANANTO

Jompert Kuswidananto was born in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 1976 and lives and works between Yogyakarta and Bali. A self-taught artist, he came to visual art via his work as a musician and performer, having initially studied Communication. He first exhibited as a visual artist in 2002 and held his first solo exhibition *Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria* at Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta in 2008. He has continued to exhibit extensively since then.

Jompert has undertaken residencies at Kawasaki Factory, Japan in 2006; Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta in 2007 and Art Space Geumcheon, Seoul, South Korea in 2010. He has also collaborated with Teater Garasi, a Yogyakarta-based contemporary theatre company, for a number of years.

Jompert Kuswidananto is represented by Ark Galerie, Jakarta.



Selected solo exhibitions

- 2011** *Third Realm, A Site Specific Installation of Jompert Kuswidananto*, Gervasuti Foundation, Venice, Italy
Java's Machine: Family Chronicle, Selasar Sunaryo, Bandung, Indonesia
- 2010** *Third Realm*, Para/Site Art Space, Hong Kong
Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria, Osage Gallery, Hong Kong
- 2009** *Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria*, Osage Gallery, Singapore
- 2008** *Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria*, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 2012** *Moscow Biennale for Young Art*, Moscow, Russia
Phantoms of Asia, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, USA
- 2011** *Jakarta Biennale*, National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Jogjakarta Biennale XI, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Global Contemporary, Art Movement Since 1989, ZKM Karlsruhe, Germany
Indonesian – Eye, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
Trans-Figuration: Indonesian mythologies, Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris, France
Negotiating Home, Nation and History, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore
Closing the Gap: Indonesian Contemporary Art, MIFA, Melbourne, Australia
- 2010** *Media Landscape, Zone East*, Contemporary Urban Culture, Liverpool, UK
Contemporaneity, Shanghai Museum of Contemporary Art, China
- 2009** *Jogjakarta Biennale X*, Jogja National Museum, Jogjakarta, Indonesia
Beyond the Dutch, Centraal Museum Utrecht, The Netherlands
10th Lyon Biennale, Musee d'art contemporaine, Lyon, France
Magnetic Power, Coreana Museum of Arts, Seoul, Korea
- 2008** *Yokohama Triennale*, Yokohama, Japan
Landing Soon, Erasmus Huis, Jakarta, Indonesia
Manifesto, National Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

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EKO NUGROHO

Eko Nugroho was born in 1977 in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, where he continues to live and work. He studied painting at the Institut Seni Indonesia (ISI), Yogyakarta.

Eko founded the artist comic collective *Daging Tumbuh* (translated variously as *Diseased Tumour* or *Growing Flesh*) in 2000 and launched the initiative *Fight For Rice (FFR)* – an outlet for merchandise and work created by emerging Indonesian artists – in 2007. He held his first solo exhibition, *Bercerobong (Like a Chimney)* at Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta in 2002 and has continued to exhibit extensively since that time.

Eko has participated in a number of international residencies in association with significant museums including the Taipei Fine Art Museum, Taipei (as part of the Taipei Biennale) and Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane (for APT5), both in 2006; Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art, Helsinki in 2007; the National Museum of Singapore and the Contemporary Arts Center, New Orleans (CACNO) in 2008, and both SAM Art Projects, Paris and ZKM | Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany in 2011. In 2009 he undertook a residency in Lyon, France as part of his participation in Hou Hanru's *X Biennale de Lyon: The Spectacle of the Everyday*.

Eko Nugroho is represented by ARNDT, Berlin and Lombard-Freid Projects, New York.

Selected solo exhibitions

- 2012** *Temoin Hybride*, Musée d'Art Moderne (MAM), Paris, France
- 2011** *The Eko Chamber: Recent Works by Eko Nugroho*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia
Snobs Behind Ketchup, Lombard Freid Projects, New York, U.S.A.
This Republic Needs More Semeleh, Ark Galerie, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2009** *Solo Exhibition of Eko Nugroho*, Galerie Nouvelles Image, The Hague, Netherlands
Under the Shadow, Pekin Fine Art, Beijing, China
In The Name Of Pating Tlecek, Nadi Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Hidden Violence, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2008** *Multicrisis Is Delicious*, Galeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia
The Pleasures Of Chaos, Ark Galerie, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2007** *In Wonderland*, Valentine Willie Fine Art Project Room, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2006** *MERDEKA ATOE SMS*, Toimoi, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2005** *Sorry I Am Late To Celebrate*, Artnivora Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
Eko Nugroho, Artoteek Den Haag, The Hague, Netherlands
- 2004** *Welcome Back Mayonnaise*, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2003** *Fight Me*, Via-Via Café, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2002** *BERCEROBONG (Like a Chimney)*, Cemeti Art House, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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Come together: the art of Jompét Kuswidananto and Eko Nugroho

by Kelly Gellatly, Senior Curator, Contemporary Art, NGV

Excerpt from ebook - RALLY: Contemporary Indonesian Art – Jompét Kuswidananto and Eko Nugroho



The dictionary definition of ‘rally’ seems to indicate that it’s a particularly versatile word and, like many words in the English language, is able to be used in a number of contexts and is open to various interpretations. Embedded within these different uses, however, is a sense of community and spectacle: people rally, or gather, for political campaigns and protest marches; they rally themselves or others, in the sense of pulling together or working towards some kind of resolve; one can rally or come to the assistance of a person, party or cause; and ‘to rally’ can also be used in the sense of finding renewed strength or vigour. A rally can assume the formation or loose structure of a parade and embrace the sense of celebration and excess at the heart of a carnival; at the same time, however, it may hold the potential for immanent disorder or, at very least, the prospect of things not quite going according to plan.

This multi-dextrous term thus provides a fascinating and appropriate framework in which to discuss and, indeed, bring together the unique practices of Jompét Kuswidananto and Eko Nugroho. As celebrated members of the art community that centres on the vibrant central Javanese city of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, their very different work not only reflects the dramatic and rapid pace of cultural, social and political change that has engulfed their nation since the fall of the Suharto regime in 1998, but also focuses on the realities and complexities of contemporary life in an increasingly globalised and interconnected world. As post-*Reformasi* artists,¹ Jompét and Eko have witnessed firsthand the bloody struggle for freedom that was fought on the

streets of Yogya, and are now each in a position to highlight the impact of democracy and the country’s relatively new-found liberties on its citizens – particularly Indonesia’s younger generation (unbelievably, more than half the country’s population are under the age of twenty-nine).² At once deeply connected to ‘place’, and at the same time truly global citizens, the artists’ individual practices speak generously of the way in which the internet, mobile phone technology and social media can establish a sense of connection between people – allowing them to communicate across vastly different geographic, time and cultural zones quickly and easily and creating, as a result, the heightened and perhaps deceptive assumption that our lives are more alike – while nevertheless emerging from, and being deeply influenced by, the distinct characteristics of the city (for Eko) and country (for Jompét) in which it is made. As Eko has commented:

If you live in Indonesia, you will understand that it is impossible to exclude politics from everyday living. Nearly 90% of the art that is made here is a response to or influenced by the socio-political conditions of our surroundings.³

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For Jompjet, similarly, the act of exhibiting his work on the global contemporary art circuit is, at its most fundamental, about a desire to 'share realities'. As he explains:

I'd like to share my realities of this interconnected world. I'd like to see others' realities too – the art world is just one of the spaces for this. So long as my works open up a dialogue, share knowledge and exchange ideas on them I think, simply, the work has done its job. It has talked to the audience. It has gained a new value.⁴

Contemporary Indonesian society is a complex, 'hybrid' beast renowned for its ability to absorb cultural influences from beyond its borders (think, for example, of the impact and eventual interweaving of the influences of Dutch colonialism) while retaining and adapting its own traditions. An archipelago comprising approximately 17,580 islands, accommodating a similarly vast array of ethnic and linguistic groups, Indonesia is a secular democracy whose national motto is 'Unity in Diversity' ('Bhinneka Tunggal Ika'), but is also the largest Muslim country in the world. Just what it means to be 'Indonesian' means very different things to different people:



We must admit that 'national identity' is a latent problem in Indonesia, so it is not easy to interpret 'Indonesian-ness'. What we now call – and know – as Indonesia, is the manifestation of various ethnic groups who had freed themselves from Dutch colonization. As a post-colonial country, its rich ethnic variation and revolutionary atmosphere (in post-New Order authoritarian regime) has instigated a certain sectarian spirit in a number of societal groupings. Furthermore, in this era of globalization, with its economic and transnational information circulation, where cultural mores from stronger geo-politic and economic forces spread out and influence 'weaker' regions, placing a definite meaning to the term 'Indonesian-ness' is not an easy task. Indonesia, as a nation, is an apt example of what Benedict Anderson calls 'imagined community'.⁵

Jompjet and Eko do not share the acute desire of Indonesia's previous generation of artists – such as Heri Dono, FX Harsano and Agus Suwage – to critique an oppressive regime in their work: as a result their individual practices touch on cultural and political subjects in a manner that is neither strident nor didactic. Within their own idiosyncratic and highly distinctive signature 'styles', each artist creates a sense of play and whimsy in their work, opening it up to a range of interpretations and experiences on behalf of the viewer that may be enriched by an understanding of Indonesian, or specifically Javanese, culture, but are in no way dependent on it. Both artists display a healthy disregard for distinct media categories and have the ability to turn their hands to a variety of ways of working – willingly collaborating or calling on the expertise of others where needs be, or working within the guise of the 'traditional' studio-based artist. Jompjet and Eko embody the attitude and 'can-do' spirit of the post-*Reformasi* era,⁶ reworking esteemed cultural traditions such as, in the case of Eko, batik and embroidery, and, in the case of Jompjet, the role and aesthetics of the Yogyakarta Sultanate Royal Army or bregada;⁷ combining them with aspects of 'globalised' popular culture such as street art, comics, music and video to successfully bring them into the present as something 'other' – fantastical, celebratory amalgams of the past and present, East and West.

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The improvisatory aesthetics of the artists' respective practices and the fact that they recycle, rework and adapt components of earlier pieces in subsequent installation contexts also loosely encompasses the Javanese concept and perception of time as non-linear. Time is not broken into distinct categories for the Javanese, but instead functions as a place or space in which the past, present and future all happily reside; bringing together the ghosts of yesteryear, the day-to-day realities of contemporary life and hopes for the future.⁸ True to this concept, and almost in spite of the diverse and often sobering influences at play in their respective practices, Jompet and Eko's work creates an optimistic picture of the future and of humankind in general.



Notes

1. *Reformasi* is the period of Reformation following the demise of the Suharto Government in 1998, which ended three decades of the New Order era under President Suharto (1965–98).
2. Dr Mari Elka Pangestu, Minister of Trade, Republic of Indonesia, preface to *Indonesian Eye: Contemporary Indonesian Art*, edited by Serenella Ciclitira, Skira, Milan, Italy, 2011.
3. Eko Nugroho, quoted in Adeline Ooi, 'The space between Eko and Nugroho', in Adeline Ooi & Beverley Young (eds.), *Eko(Space)Nugroho*, trans. Rani Elsanti Ambyo & Adeline Ooi, Daging Tumbuh Studio, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2011, p. 16.
4. Jompet Kuswidananto, conversation with the author, 9 Oct. 2012.
5. Asmudjo Jono Irianto, 'Eyeing Indonesian contemporary art', in Ciclitira, p. 23. Benedict Anderson is the Aaron L. Binenkorb Professor Emeritus of International Studies, Government and Asian Studies, Cornell University, New York. His book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* was published in 1983.
6. This comment was written about Eko, but I think it equally applies to Jompet. See Ooi, 'The space between Eko and Nugroho', p. 15.
7. *Bregada* is adapted from the Dutch word 'brigade'. Agung Hujatnikajennong, 'Jompet Kuswidananto', in *Jompet Kuswidananto*, artist profile, April 2012, *Indonesian Visual Art Archive*, <<http://archive.ivaa-online.org/archive/files/uploads/texts/JOMPET%20PROFILE%20APR12%20rev.pdf>>, accessed 28 Sept. 2012.
8. This comment was originally made about Jompet's work, but is also true of Eko's practice. See Yudi Aht & Jompet Kuswidananto, 'Java's machine', in *Jompet Kuswidananto*, artist profile.

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RALLY AT THE NGV

NGV International

Saturday 20 October

Join our NGV celebration of contemporary Indonesian art. Hear Eko Nugroho and Jompet Kuswidananto discuss their artwork, hear about Indonesian art, politics and music from guest speakers and explore the exhibition. Kids get hands-on making art inspired by Eko and Jompet. Rally your family and friends and come along for a free day of art and discovery.



11–11.45am: In Conversation: Curators & collaborators

Speakers Eko Nugroho and Jompet Kuswidananto, exhibiting artists; Serena Bentley, independent curator; Kelly Gellatly, Senior Curator, Contemporary Art, NGV. Meet Contemporary Exhibitions, Ground Level.

12–12.15pm: Kids walk with Eko

Eko Nugroho will talk about his mural on the Waterwall. Meet NGV Foyer, Ground Level.

12.15–12.30pm: Kids walk with Jompet

Meet Federation Court, Ground Level.

12.30–1.15pm: In Conversation: Artists & Indonesia

Speakers Eko Nugroho, exhibiting artist; Sarah Bond, Director, Visual Arts Asialink. Meet Contemporary Exhibitions, Ground Level.

1.30–2pm: Kids rally round the artists

A pass-the-mic question and answer session with the artists. Meet Contemporary Exhibitions, Ground Level.

2–2.45pm: In Conversation: Art and music

Speakers Jompet Kuswidananto, exhibiting artist; Dylan Martorell, artist and musician. Meet Contemporary Exhibitions, Ground Level.

3.30–4pm: In Conversation: Artist collectives in Indonesia

Eko Nugroho, exhibiting artist, and Edwina Brennan, Exhibitions Coordinator, NGV, discuss the comic collective Daging Tumbuh and the pop-up shop project Fight For Rice. Meet NGV Shop, Ground Level.

4-4.45pm: In Conversation: Politics, art & Indonesia

Jompet Kuswidananto, exhibiting artist; Max Lane, political commentator. Meet Contemporary Exhibitions, Ground Level.

5–6pm: NGV Satellite Event: Rally in the lane

Eko Nugroho, exhibiting artist and Kelly Gellatly, Senior Curator, Contemporary Art, NGV, discuss his latest work in Hosier Lane. Cnr Hosier Lane and Flinders Street, opposite Fed Square.

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PUBLICATION

RALLY will be accompanied by an illustrated ebook for the iPad, *RALLY: Contemporary Indonesian Art – Jompet Kuswidananto and Eko Nugroho*, available for free download in the iTunes Store from early November. The *RALLY* ebook is also viewable in the NGV Shop. This is the first digital publication to be produced by the NGV and it will feature rich multimedia elements, such as video and zoomable images, as well as essays on the artists.

NGV DIGITAL

RALLY: Contemporary Indonesian Art utilises QR (quick-response) code technology throughout the exhibition space.

To read QR codes, you will need a QR code-reader app* and a smartphone or tablet equipped with a camera. Launch your QR code-reader app and line up your device's camera with a QR code. Hold the device steady until the app recognises the QR code. Your device will then display the information the code contains or launch your web browser to take you to a designated URL.

For the best results, aim your device squarely at the QR code and minimise any glare.

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USB CARD CONTENT

- Media kit materials
- High resolution artwork images and captions
- Video content

CAPTIONS

1. **Jompert Kuswidananto** Video still from *On asphalt* 2012 5 channel colour video, sound, 10 mins, looped, music by Risky Summerbee Collection of the artist, Indonesia © Jompert Kuswidananto
2. **Eko Nugroho** Indonesian 1977– *Mask Series #1* 2012 (part of a set with *Membeli 98 Benci, Untuk Membutakan Toleransi Sebiji*, exhibited at Arndt, Berlin, 2012) rayon thread (machine embroidered) on fabric, wire 225.0 x 140.0 cm Courtesy of the artist and ARNDT, Berlin, 2012 © Eko Nugroho
3. **Jompert Kuswidananto** Indonesian 1976– *Family Chronicles* 2011 colour photograph Courtesy of the artist and Ark Galerie © Jompert Kuswidananto
4. **Eko Nugroho** Indonesian 1977– *Creamy policy* 2010 acrylic on canvas 200.0 cm x 150.0 cm Private Collection, Jakarta Courtesy of the artist and Ark Galerie © Eko Nugroho
5. **Eko Nugroho** Indonesian 1977– *Threat As A Flavour* installation view ARNDT, Berlin, 2012 Courtesy of the artist and ARNDT, Berlin © Eko Nugroho
Photo: Bernd Borchardt
6. **Jompert Kuswidananto** Indonesian 1976– *Java's Machine: Phantasmagoria* 2008 mixed media installation with sound and video Courtesy of the artist and Ark Galerie © Jompert Kuswidananto Photo: Norihiro

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