

A black and white photograph of a lake. In the foreground, there is a rocky shore with dense foliage and tall grasses. A small, gnarled tree stands in the water, its reflection visible. The background shows a line of trees across the water. The sky is bright and overcast.

**PROSPECT.3**

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# Notes for Now



AGUS SUWAGE. *Tolerance #1 (Toleransi #1)*, 2012. Oil, acrylic, and bitumen on canvas; 59 × 79 in. (149.9 × 200.7 cm)

## AGUS SUWAGE

The Indonesian artist Agus Suwage employs symbols to convey his experience of the world around him and as a form of social critique. Born in 1959 in Central Java, he studied graphic design at the Institut Teknologi Bandung (Bandung Institute of Technology) in West Java before settling in Yogyakarta, a major center for contemporary art on the island. His work is heavily informed by his mixed Javanese and Chinese heritage. In the series on view at Prospect.3, the word "tolerance" (*toleransi*) has a dual meaning. On the one hand, it refers ironically to the increasingly intolerant social climate in Indonesia, particularly with

regard to religion. On the other hand, it alludes to Suwage's desire to find a solution that makes life more tolerable within that atmosphere.

*Tolerance Wall #2 (Tembak Toleransi #2)*, a self-portrait created from recycled tin cans and parts of car audio systems, represents a buffer between Suwage's Yogyakarta studio and the blaring noise of loudspeakers from nearby mosques, which magnify the Muslim call to prayer. The loudspeaker signifies the mouthpiece of the religious majority—Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world—which has often been at odds with the minority population of Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists. Suwage himself was Christian before converting to Islam for marriage. A row of small speakers pierces through the artist's ears, nose, and eyes, suggesting an overbearing assault on the senses. The mosaic grid of tin cans in *Tolerance Wall* is replicated in two paintings on canvas from the same series; multi-colored circles, seemingly units of sound, issue, in one case, from a loudspeaker and, in the other, into an ear, both superimposed over the artist's silhouette.

JR



AGUS SUWAGE. *Tolerance Wall #2 (Tembak Toleransi #2)*, 2013. Screen print and paint on recycled tin cans, car audio systems, and sound; 11 ft. 6½ in. x 14 ft. 11¼ in. x 7½ in. (358 x 457 x 16 cm)