

AGUS SUWAGE

CYCLE No. 2



Tembok Toleransi, 2013



Malaikat Yang Menjaga Hankamnas #3, 2012



Social Mirrors, 2013

Tyler Rollins Fine Art is pleased to welcome Agus Suwage back to New York for his second solo exhibition with the gallery, *CYCLE No. 2* (February 28 – April 13, 2013). Curated by Enin Supriyanto, one of Indonesia's leading independent curators, the exhibition marks the second stage of a major new body of work to be shown in three cities around the world – Jakarta, New York, and Berlin. These exhibitions focus on the theme of the cycle of life and death, an ongoing preoccupation of the artist, and represent a very personal reflection on this cycle, referencing Suwage's own mixed Javanese and Chinese background and his experience as a Christian convert to Islam, while also alluding to Java's Hindu, Buddhist, and animist spiritual traditions. Although grounded in this personal vision, the works exhibit a deep socio-political engagement, an important aspect of the artist's work since the 1990s. Suwage's works have often made critiques – sometime pointed, sometimes veiled – of various forms of intolerance (social, religious, or political) and of the attempt to impose a single rigid, monolithic structure on society, whether by the Suharto regime in the 1990s or more recently by the rise of a more fundamentalist strain of Islam in Indonesia.

The works in *CYCLE No. 2* directly incorporate religious motifs – the Virgin Mary, Muslim prayer attire, angels and demons – as well as the actual sounds of prayers. Yet they also contain many references to motifs seen in Suwage's own works over the years, reflecting his longstanding concern with artistic influence and the process of artistic inspiration, and with the role of the artist in society. The self-portrait remains a central focus, with the artist's image appearing in various disguises and permutations throughout the works. Suwage continues to make use of zinc panels, one of his primary media in the past few years, exploring the expressive possibilities of their rugged patina and monochromatic surfaces, a process begun with *The End Is Just Beginning Is the End* (2010) at Tyler Rollins Fine Art, his first solo exhibition in the United States.

Religious themes are foregrounded with the large-scale installation, *Tolerance Wall*, made of bricks crafted from recycled tin, the colored labels of which form an iconic self-portrait of the artist, with speakers broadcasting prayers of the major religions of Indonesia. A related work, *Social Mirrors*, shows a small figure of the artist in traditional prayer attire in front of a brass cornet playing the Muslim call to prayer. With *Ave Mariam*, the image of the Virgin Mary is conflated with that of a woman wearing a Muslim hijab, with the face based on an earlier self-portrait of the artist, reflecting his own mixed background. The autobiographical theme is continued in *Paradiso – Inferno #5*, which references earlier works by Suwage in which he wears the mask of a pig, an unclean animal in Islam, but also the artist's birth year according to the Chinese zodiac calendar.

One of Indonesia's most revered and internationally active contemporary artists, Suwage has been featured in approximately 150 museum and gallery exhibitions around the world, and his works are included in most comprehensive collections of Southeast Asian contemporary art. Over the past few decades, he has exhibited in a number of international biennials, such as the Asia Pacific Triennial in Brisbane, Australia (1996), the Gwangju Biennial (2000), and the Singapore Biennial (2006). In 2009, the Jogja National Museum in Indonesia devoted all three floors of its building to a major retrospective of Suwage's works of the past 25 years, including paintings, sculptures, and installations. A 670-page monograph of his work, *Still Crazy After All These Years*, was published in conjunction with this landmark exhibition. We hope that *CYCLE No. 2* will mark an important opportunity for American audiences to become more familiar with the immense richness and variety of his art.

GALLERY HOURS: Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm, or by appointment.