

## Art in Review



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST  
AND TYLER ROLLINS FINE ART

“Tembok Toleransi No. 2,” a mixed-media self-portrait by Agus Suwage, at Tyler Rollins.

### Agus Suwage

‘Cycle No. 2’

Tyler Rollins Fine Art  
529 West 20th Street, Chelsea  
Through April 13

Born in 1959, Agus Suwage (pronounced soo-AH-gay) is one of Indonesia’s most visible contemporary artists. His New York solo debut at Tyler Rollins Fine Art in 2011 was death-saturated, filled with images of skeletons, though its tone was far from downbeat. Mr. Suwage, who began his career as graphic designer in the city of Jogjakarta, where he lives and works, made a brash, antic thing of mortality: a skull in one oil-on-zinc painting had Mickey Mouse ears; another got a kiss on the mouth from the artist himself.

The tone of this new show is more restrained and the imagery more varied, with self-portraiture the common thread. Mr. Suwage’s face, grinning and spectacled, greets us in an 11-foot-high mosaiclike mural pieced together from recycled tin cans and car audio systems. At the far end of the gallery, he reappears in cutout silhouette as the Virgin Mary, with a flaming heart burning at the center of his chest.

And he turns up yet again, in miniature, dressed in Indonesian

Muslim robes, with his hands pressed to his ears as he stands facing a real brass trumpet from which emerges a soft voice chanting the azan, or Muslim call to prayer. Mr. Suwage is a convert to Islam from Christianity, but the sound of the azan electronically broadcast from competing mosques in the neighborhood surrounding his studio has become aggressively loud, and all but deafening, as is, he suggests, the presence of Islam in Indonesian politics.

Topical commentary has always been the foundation of this remarkable artist’s work. He’s a born satirist, which means a born moralist. The range of his subjects, cultural and existential, is broad; his take, vivid and sharp.

HOLLAND COTTER