

HERI DONO
Indonesian Artist

HERI DONO is a key figure in Indonesian art and one of the best known artists in Southeast Asia.

The artist

Heri Dono is born in Jakarta in 1960. He studied art at the Indonesian Institute of the Arts of Yogyakarta (1980-87). He was then trained in the art of Wayang Kulit, traditional Indonesian puppets (1987-88). He studied for a year at the University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia (2002). He collaborated on curatorship work at IFA Stuttgart, Germany in 2004. He lives and works in Yogyakarta.

Artwork

Heri Dono is known for his installations that result from his great mastery of the popular wayang puppets of the Java theatre. He works in various media: installations, painting, theatre and sculpture, including sculpture on wheels, what he calls "vehicle art". In his paintings, Heri Dono uses a large number of wild distortions and free fantasies from which emerge characters from wayang stories. Adding his deep knowledge of children's cartoons, animated films and comics, Heri Dono's paintings are always filled with extremely amazing characters of fantastic, absurd and inextricably related stories. He sometimes adds his own critical remarks on socio-political issues in Indonesia and abroad. Heri Dono's installations are a good example of an attempt to creatively revitalize deep-rooted artistic practices in Indonesia.

In 1996, in his first solo exhibition in Britain, "Blooming in Arma" at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, he presented a fantastic but disturbing set of figures apparently half-man, half-tree on false legs, parading with pistols, linking these prosthetic legs to anti-personnel mines. He noted that while the Indonesian government had launched a campaign to encourage people to plant trees in a quasi-Green initiative, there was at the same time systematic deforestation of Sumatra, Kalimantan and Irian Jaya.

His recent paintings are magnificent with rich images and colors. In 2017, Heri Dono presented at Tang Contemporary Art in Hong Kong, a new series of paintings related to current and political problems affecting society. Wild compositions of political caricatures, spaceships, animals, machines and mythological beasts illustrated the relationships of these new power structures in contradiction with each other, and with all the victims resulting from this. In "Trump vs. the Dragon" and "Between Two Cards," both tables examined the ethics of choosing one thing over another, each asking the following question: do their moral consequences have the same weight?