



"How science studies Luke" 2012, Charcoal on canvas, 190 x 300 cm / 6.2 x 9.10 feet



"The Blind Leader" 2012, Charcoal on canvas, 190 x 300 cm / 6.2 x 9.10 feet

J. Ariadhitya Pramuhendra "Religion of Science"
Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong / August 22nd - September 14th 2012

Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong is pleased to present J. Ariadhitya Pramuhendra's solo show "Religion of Science", from August 22nd to September 14th 2012.

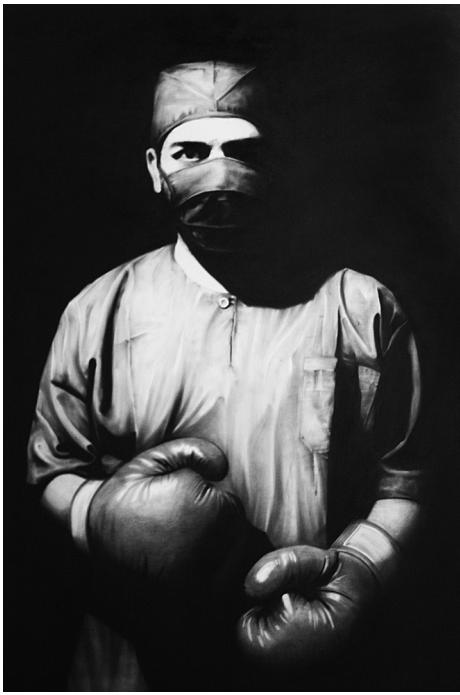
Remarkable for his realistic black and white charcoal paintings, J. Ariadhitya Pramuhendra (b. 1984 in Semarang, Indonesia) creates uncanny realistic portraits and theatrical figurative scenes that evoke Christian iconography, surreal science, and the empowering of self. His works question the spiritual validity of authoritative organisational structures such as organised religions and the medical corps in their search for truth and the divine in man. Pramuhendra investigates the question of one's core identity, expanding from his own traditional catholic upbringing within the context of practicing Christianity in a Muslim country – the largest Muslim country in the world in fact – visually expressing his search through monochrome aesthetics that draw from figural representation, personal and cultural symbolism, tradition, renaissance, and pop art - in opposition to Islamic religious art aniconism.

Pramuhendra grew up in Indonesia, where most of the questioning around faith resides in knowing to which religion one belongs (out of the six religions officially recognized by the constitution. Agnosticism and atheism aren't acknowledged in the country, which is emphasized by the fact that Indonesian National ID cards have to mention the religion of their beholders). As a follower of the catholic faith, Pramuhendra is part of a very small minority, among a large Muslim majority. His family's practices were foreign to most, barring his group from participating in certain activities of the community, and later informing his art by relying on his own family to model for his paintings. In addition to the intrinsic sense of belonging that ties families together, Pramuhendra shows the isolated property of his "tribe". Although a country of peaceful and friendly manners, Indonesia's religious segregative society and the rising influence of conservative Islam, presented the artist with circumstances prone to initiate a crisis of identity. He questions his role and place, the distance between his homeland and the Vatican, the similarity but especially the differences in cult between "his" religion and the "others!". The organisation of the Roman Catholic Church, with its hierarchical system and its leaders is so different from the way he sees his Muslim neighbours being organised in their prayers. It both intrigues and inspires the artist who portrays himself in his paintings in an attempt to understand firsthand the dynamic of faith as well as the politics of religion. Pramuhendra experiences the challenges in defining his identity in the Asian context, where the practice of religion is so entangled with the everyday life, and churches are filled with followers eager to maintain

the faith alive and perpetuating rules that they adopted automatically since birth without the power of choice. Growing up, he never really questioned the rules that organise his faith, and is now inquiring about what constitute one's identity, what is innate and what is acquired?

After the fall of Suharto's military regime in May 1998, Indonesia embarked upon a transition towards democracy, opening up to intellectual reasoning; and in the arts, beginning to accept socially engaged works and political criticism. Artists who developed conceptual practices away from traditional techniques and decoration – although the beautiful and the ornamental remain strong characteristics of the Indonesian visual language – became free to disclose opinions and show previously banned artworks. The quickly opening-up and growing toward acceptance of the art scene, and its rising role as a place for discussion, encouraged Pramuhendra's generation to search for their own meaning and define their personal stance about society. In doing so young artists take as a departing point their own humanity and condition, to then actively engage in a personal observation of society as a whole and through their next door neighbour. The local art market boom of 2008 has put Indonesian artists on the international map with record prices at auctions, and budding interests for international exhibitions. At the same time it unveiled a strong but complex local collector base composed of market savvy investors as well as art educated aesthetes. Internationally, it introduced a visual language drawing from the senses, the colourful and the vibrant, and normalised indo-pop aesthetics on the contemporary art scene. In return such aperture brought a sense of artistic novelty to Indonesia that sparked artists to think and create outside of their traditional visual language. Local artists have always been extremely active, with many places in the country that encourage artistic communities to flourish, such as exotic Bali; chilled and experimentally oriented Yogyakarta; conceptually driven Bandung - where Pramuhendra has his studio - and of course the capital Jakarta with its galleries, exhibition spaces and auction places. In addition to religious conservatism and a welcomed - and seemingly contradictory - intellectual and artistic progressiveness, Indonesia is home to a long and intricate tradition of crafts, and although crafts are the lesser considered cousins of contemporary arts, they are undeniably powerful when it comes to their influence on those artists who live in under-industrialised areas where traditional crafts are omnipresent, and even conceptual artists hold the highest respect for the draftsman's artistic skills and handmade works.

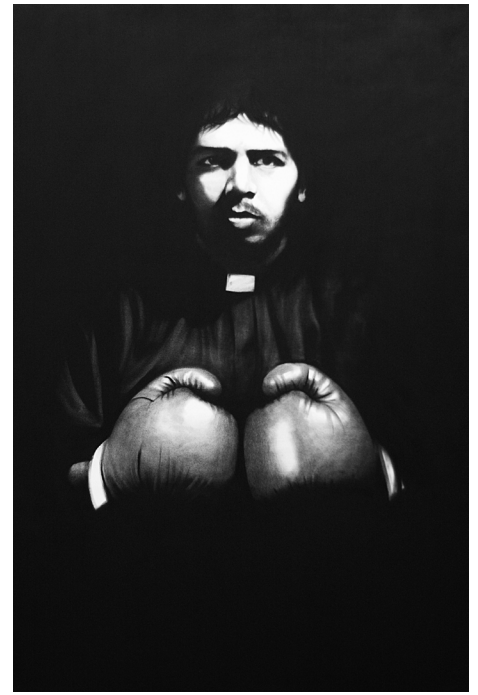
When Pramuhendra started showing his religious subject in 2006 he was one of the rare to explore the topic, with the consequence of surprising and raising concerns for his choices among his audience. The artist felt strongly about exploring a way to assert who he was, all the while in the



"A Man who lives by a question" 2012
Charcoal on canvas
200 x 150 cm / 6.6 feet x 59 inches



"My Right" 2012
Charcoal on canvas
200 x 150 cm / 6.6 feet x 59 inches



"A Man who lives by prayer" 2012
Charcoal on canvas
200 x 150 cm / 6.6 feet x 59 inches

process of discovering it and asking the question to himself. His works are about fully assuming a set of beliefs he just started to explore critically.

Departing from the idea that if an artist is to ambitiously tackle core life questions and universal human issues, then he should start from the study of self, Pramuhendra develops series that stage his representation repetitively, as well as his family's, in various black and white renditions where he is endorsing the role of Jesus Christ, the pope, a minister, a doctor, in a realistic photographic style yet close to a twenty-first century Georges de La Tour or Caravaggio with chiaroscuro renderings and dramatic potency.

By working on self-portraits, Pramuhendra's practice echoes the long artistic tradition of self-portraiture. Often showing himself in a position of authority, he points at the power of the robe, and appropriates to himself its strengths and weaknesses. By picturing his spirituality through the one religion he is intimate with and immersed in since birth, his ways echo the ambiguous relationships experienced by some contemporary artists such as Gerhard Richter with the Western Church. But by posing himself and his family successively as the Redeemer, a Catholic pope or a nun; and by visually integrating medical imagery, secular postures and profane body languages, Pramuhendra points at the opposition in concepts between criticising and belonging, practicing blindly and consciously approving, trusting religious leadership and finding one's own answers through a personal connection with the divine. Somehow managing to mix dramatic effect and a touch of humour by gently creating visual oppositions, Pramuhendra raises universal questions: where is sacred within us, is it in our bodies? Does it belong to the religious leaders? Science? Where does the power of God resides?

His works are part of those contemporary art practices that explore religion, and religiosity, by pointing at the political organization that is the church, its leaders, its power struggles, and its acceptance or non-acceptance of others. As opposed to a contemporary political or social critique where the artists are both outsiders and heir of the religious culture they dispute, Pramuhendra's practice openly claims a heartfelt introspection and a religious devotion, particular to the geopolitics of his Indonesian catholic background. One could think of Francis Bacon's Screaming Popes series, where Bacon brought forward emotions about his own condition under the pretences of a purple robe, in opposition to

how Pramuhendra approaches his spiritual grief and doubt by empowered representations of self, and calm attitudes on canvas, but also how he alternates surrender and expectation.

Pramuhendra's use of charcoal as a medium is an evolution of his background in printmaking. Through his experience of the medium, in conjunction with his subject matter, he developed a visual language and technique compatible with the themes he describes. Drawing is a medium sensitive to the artistic thought process, it both reveals the artist's intention, and creates an intimate aura for whom experiences the paintings directly. Black and white realism references photography but by creating unreal scenes Pramuhendra's works emanate an eerie quality, a visual stunt that is hard to replicate. The black of the charcoal, the symbolism of the fire, the burning, the purgatory are not so distant from the way the artist experiences art making, using his fingers, physically engaging with his paintings, taking the time in loneliness to meditatively, layer after layer, create large visual statements, reminiscent of the Shroud of Turin – the black and white ash print of the body of Jesus Christ, believed to be his burial cloth. Enhanced by the charcoal chiaroscuro effect, his images carry extraordinary emotional impact, evoking the monumental & striking drawings by Robert Longo.

Pramuhendra's work defy elitism, in art and in culture, his youthful approach is grave – to nearly comical extends at times due to an extreme staged dramatisation of his characters – and bold: he stages himself as pope, or stages his relatives in surrendering postures, such as when the females in his family are represented partially nude, crucified yet strong.

There are no simple and quick ways to interpret meanings in Pramuhendra's works, and there should not be since they are the result of a visceral response to the human condition that the artist interprets through images that contain multiple associations. He gives himself entirely to the canvas, devotedly, using a disarmingly simple and potent visual language that evolved from his research into his own spirituality, literally diving within the notion of identity - but really creating a world for itself, staging the artist as a seer, as a surgeon into the soul, researching the unknown, surrendering to his own power.



"The Four Thinkers" 2012, Charcoal on canvas, 190 x 300 cm / 6.2 x 9.10 feet

All images : Courtesy Galerie Perrotin, Hong Kong & Paris

J. Ariadhitya Pramuhendra was born in 1984 in Semarang, Indonesia.

SOLO SHOWS

- 2010** "ASHES TO ASHES", ART HK10, Hong Kong International Art Fair, China
- 2009** "Spacing Identities", NUS Museum, Singapore; "Spacing Identities : Part Two", Mapping Asia – CIGE 2009, Beijing, China
- 2008** "On Last Supper", Cemara 6 Galeri, Jakarta, Indonesia

GROUP SHOWS

- 2010** "Jiwa Ketok", Galeri Adira, Bandung, Indonesia ; "Critical Points", Edwin Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia ; "SEA Drawing Exhibition", Ark Galerie, Jakarta, Indonesia ; "The Strategies of Being", Art-Jog10, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Indonesia ; "No Direction Home", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia ; "MenasArt", Royal Pavillon, Beirut, Lebanon ; "My World, Your World, Our World", Wendt Gallery, NY, USA
- 2009** "Middlebare Akte", Soemardja Gallery, Bandung Institute of Technology, Bandung, Indonesia ; "Broadsheet Notations: Epilogue", Tang Contemporary Art, Bangkok, Thailand ; "The Hand That Draws Itself", 18 Gallery , Shanghai, China ; "Kado #2, Nadi Galery", Jakarta, Indonesia ; "The Sovereign Asian Art Prize" Hong Kong, China ; ASYAAF Korean Contemporary Art Fair, Korea ; "Indonesian Contemporary Drawing " National Galery of Indonesia, Jakarta,Indonesia ; ART HK09, Hong Kong International Art Fair, China ; "Revisiting the Last Supper", CGArtspace, Indonesia ; "Bandung Art Now", Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2008** "Passion – Best of Discovery Project with Agus Suwage", ShContemporary, Shanghai, China ; Dallas Art Fair, USA ; "Art Asia", Miami, USA ; "Passions", ShContemporary 08, Shanghai, China ; "Searching In Red and Black", Laggeng Icon, Jakarta, Indonesia ; "Space/Spacing", Semarang Art Gallery, Semarang, Indonesia ; "Bandung New Emergence Vol.2", Selasar Sunaryo, Bandung, Indonesia ; "Manifesto", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia ; "Indonesia and The Mainstream", CIGE, Beijing, China, "Slice", Soka Art Center, Beijing, China, "Scale of Black", Valentine Willie Fine Art, Singapore ; "3 Young Contemporary Artist", Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia ; "Invasi Bandung", Galeri Canna, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2007** "Kuota", Galeri Nasional, Jakarta, Indonesia ; "Petisi Bandung", Galeri Laggeng, Magelang, Indonesia ; "Errata-Optika", Selasar Sunaryo Art Space, Bandung, Indonesia ; "On Appropriation", Galeri Semarang, Indonesia ; "Preview Bandung New Artist", Cemara 6 Galeri, Jakarta, Indonesia ; "Seven", Galeri Sumarja, Bandung, Indonesia
- 2006** "Re : Siapakah Aku" (published on Khazanah, Pikiran Rakyat Newspaper) ; 12th International Biennale Print and Drawing Exhibition, National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts
- 2005** "Tubuh dalam Drawing", Ci+ Gallery, Bandung, Indonesia ; "Human + Space", Galeri Soemardja, Bandung, Indonesia
- 2004** "Pabrik Artifisial", Kedai Kebun Forum Gallery, Yogyakarta, Indonesia ; "SM 3025", Galeri Soemardja, Bandung, Indonesia
- 2003** "Ekologi Demokrasi", Lebak Siliwangi, Bandung, Indonesia ; "Inkubasi", Aula Timur ITB, Bandung, Indonesia

Galerie Perrotin, Head of Press & Communication

Héloïse Le Carvenne : heloise@perrotin.com + 33 1 42 16 91 80