

ows and masks. As in *wayang* stories, the world of cartoons, through its distortion and elaboration, can demonstrate the “really real” in Indonesian society.

By looking for contact and direct relationship with the viewer through laughter, humor, and indigenous references, Dono avoids traces of modernity, which relegates certain kinds of creativity as minor arts and curiosities. In this context, Dono attempts to overlap art and anthropology, which is seen as reciprocal but not always in equilibrium. Here, Dono shares concepts of intermixtures of art, rituals, rites of passage, and spiritualism as “language” of communication. It is worthwhile to draw similar ideas found in recent art projects that strongly link with anthropology. With an awareness of the major pitfalls when discussing non-Western cultures and arts, Jean-Hubert Martin reminds us in the exhibition *Sharing of Exoticisms (Partage d’Exotismes)* at the 5th Biennale of Contemporary Art of Lyon (2000) that old hierarchies and the prejudices of “other people’s art” tend to die hard.²⁰ As Martin wrote, “For a long time, it was accepted that artists, through their works, gave an account of these marginal, popular, or exotic aesthetics. Today, when all the necessary means exist for acceding directly to the authors of these registers, one cannot continue to accept the idea of translations, appropriations, and borrowings based on them, without also giving a hearing to the original representatives of these territories. From then on, one can talk about a ‘sharing of exoticism’ in the free circulation of signs, avoiding exploitation.” Indirectly, Martin’s warning about schematic binaries can be applied to how Dono’s work is perceived. “On the one side,” wrote Martin, “there is the West and its cultures which, while highly diverse, also represent, when it comes down to it, certain unity; and then there are the others, which are lumped together in what we regularly condense into a single entity. But these others are, in fact, innumerable in their diversity, and can never be reduced to generalities.”²¹

fig. 9 (p. 20)

Kallatte Parameswara Kurup from Kerala, 2000, at the Lyon Biennale, France

Dalang Dono’s Scary Monsters and Super Freaks

Dono was born and brought up among six siblings in Jakarta, where his father served in the military. Since he was a child, Dono always wanted to be an artist. After spending seven years at the Indonesia Institute of the Arts in Yogyakarta, Dono dropped out because he felt writing an art thesis was not part of becoming an artist. Frustrated with the academic system, Dono became aware of the possibilities of the *wayang kulit* when in 1987 he met the local puppet maker Sigit Sukasman. Sukasman founded the *Wayang Ukur* Group, which used traditional forms with stage effects to tell stories about heroism, devotion, honor, as well as human rights and the distribution of power.²² Dono realized its potential as the key paradigm for communication with the masses through rich narratives. Fascinated by the exaggerations of facial expressions, forward-stretched necks, large eyes, and gaping mouths of Sukasman’s shadow puppets, Dono began to experiment in multiple disciplines including painting, sculpture, music, dance, literature, and performance. Furthermore, he was willing to explore the possibilities of the *wayang* by making comparison with Picasso’s concept of distortion and abstraction, as well as by introducing folktales in place of the classical *wayang* repertoire.

fig. 10 (p. 20)

Sigit Sukasman in his studio, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 2000

By extending art as a normal part of daily existence, Dono fused various disciplines so that they exist together without questioning the problem of high art and low art. Realizing the potential flexibility in many art fields, Dono easily crossed over boundaries that often restrained creativity and expression. In most of his work, there are traces of puppetry and masquerade containing both comedy and tragedy. By inventing his own style of *wayang* performance, Dono allowed traditional Indonesian epic stories to exist with folklore and legends from the provinces in Indonesia. In believing that *wayang* belongs to the people, he felt that folktales, oral history, rumor, and gossip are parts of mass entertainment. Dono wrote, “Life is a fragment of the drama for human-beings, such as puppets. It may be the strength of the system and the untouchable institutions creating the human-beings to become puppetry on this Earth.”²³

fig. 11 (p. 21)

Heri Dono, *Wayang Legenda*, 1988, performance

Wayang Legenda (1988, 1992) is an important work inspired by Batakese folktale

and legend. Dono performed as *dalang* as he orchestrated and produced the *wayang* performance. He created grotesque, freakish, and comical shadow-puppet characters relating to the Batakese story of marriage between different castes and clans.²⁴ He felt that stories and tales from provincial places are as rich and imaginative as those from traditional Indonesian epics. But he did not exclude them altogether. In *The Drunkenness of Semar* (1995), Dono reinterpreted the deity in the *Mahabharata* epic, transforming Semar into *Supersemar* (a parody of Superman and local sweet-cake called *semar mendem*). The tipsy and jovial god-clown in the state of drunken stupor is symbolic of rulers and politicians whose sweet talk, oozing with charm and insincerity, often reflects their greed. *Supersemar*'s wisdom/stupidity is intended as a critique of authority's abuse of power. Dono's double meaning of *Supersemar* relates to the acronym for the Decree of 11 March 1966, by which Sukarno was persuaded to sign a document bestowing wide powers on General Suharto (*Su, surat* = letter; *Per, perintah* = order, affirmation; *Se, selebas* = eleven; *Mar, Maret* = March).²⁵ In *Phartysemar* (1998), Dono referred to Semar's power in the exhibition of sound art, by selling jars of Semar's farts as weapons to fight evil forces. By taking the comical character of Semar a step further, Dono made the god's farts part of art.

There are affinities between Dono's play of surreal and macabre shadows with works by European artists such as Christian Boltanski's *Theatre d'Ombres* (*Theatre of Shadows*) (1984) and Annette Messager's *Eux et Nous, Nous et Eux* (*Them and Us, Us and Them*) (2000) in their exaggerations of monstrous forms projected on to the surrounding walls. Yet it is clear that Dono's references to Indonesian symbolism require contextual explanation similar to comprehension of referential works (16th-century ivory carvings of death and the armor of Albert of Brandenburg, Duke of Prussia ca.1526) and site specificity (Palace of the Popes, Avignon) when looking at installations by Boltanski and Messager, respectively.²⁶

In *Watching the Marginal People 2000* (2000, cat.no.4), 10 terrifying monstrous masks / faces with vicious teeth and bulging eyes move noisily from side to side. Through Javanese animism, Dono infused the belief that all things in the world have a soul. In this case, the monsters' shifting eyes, which are electronically operated, are metaphors of dark spirits, manipulation, and alienation resulting from rapid social transformation and globalization. Like Burisrawa, the greedy giant *wayang* character, these monsters watch and wait with hunger. Their victims are the underclass and the underprivileged from peripheral places. In *Kuda Binal* (*Wild Horse*) (1992), volunteers including children and gravediggers from Kleben in Yogyakarta replaced puppets in Dono's performance, which took place near the Sultan's palace complex. Inspired by traditional horse-trance dance (*jaran kepeng*) with bamboo dummy horses, Dono's version consisted of common people in gas masks and underwear worn outside their trousers performing a fire dance. The scenes contained contemporary events as well as mythology. The theme of the systematic destruction of nature by human greed and arrogance was shown through scenes of fighting battalions for the sake of peace. In the end, the dragon and *Tok Tok* (representative of slaughtered creatures) eventually destroyed the entire universe.²⁷

Fermentation of Mind (1994, cat.no.5) is a provocative work that comments on the tendencies of Indonesian authorities to use propaganda and censorship to implement national policies and to control the minds of the masses. Set in the gloomy space of a classroom or interrogating cell, nodding fiberglass heads (Dono's self-portraits) behind school desks bend rhythmically to the repetitive grainy sound emerging from broken speakers. These bald heads with closed eyes are propped up by metal rods and manipulated not by puppet strings but electronic circuits. Like some decapitated heads from war trophies on display, they are both sad and frightening. All things should have a soul, but from propaganda and mass media, these heads are empty of brains and are filled with selective information, dogmatic teaching, and chanting (*mantra*).²⁸ In contrast, *Ceremony of the Soul* (1995, cat.no.6) consists of nine fiberglass heads (also Dono's self-

fig.12 (p.21)
Christian Boltanski, *Theatre of Shadows*, 1984/2000, La
Bauté, Avignon, France

fig.13 (p.22)
Heri Dono, *Kuda Binal* (*Wild Horse*), 1992, performance,
Yogyakarta, Indonesia

portraits) on stone torsos. The frontal posture of similar sculptures made of stone found near Borobodur sites suggests links with traditional Buddhist icons. When these stones were carved by gravediggers at the house of Dono's assistant, whose father was a soothsayer (*dukun*), Dono was informed that many spirits gathered to have a meeting there. This led Dono to entitle this work *Ceremony of the Soul*. The robotic and wide-eyed stares of these military decorated figures also relates to order, routine, and power. Wooden artificial limbs with no hands, lit by tiny light bulbs, and a hissing sound from tape recorders placed inside the carved torsos evoke a combination of supernatural, military, and electronic forces. The hum of shaking yellow fans also adds to the dramatic effect. Yellow has a significant meaning. In this case, it is not symbolic of Buddhism but signifies the color of the Golkar (Golongan Karya) Party. As Dono created this work for the "Unity in Diversity: Contemporary Art of the Non-Aligned Countries" exhibition held in Jakarta in 1995, he risked getting into trouble with the authorities, as it contained political implications. President Suharto and members of the Golkar Party who attended the opening of this international art event must have been informed about Dono's provocative installation.²⁹

In *Gamelan of Rumor* (1992-93, cat.no.7), emphasis is placed on sound installation, which is an integral part of a *wayang* performance. The concepts of *gamelan* as musical instruments providing harmonious balance between different worlds and playing for invisible guests are explored by Dono, whose orchestra plays magically without musicians. The human and the supernatural are connected by sound created by Dono's ingenious invention of electronically operated musical instruments. His experimental sound is intended to create notes that differ from those of the traditional *gamelan*. His low-tech engineering often breaks down—like humans and gods, who are at times on different wave-lengths. Commenting on high-tech communication systems, Dono wrote, "They often do not make sense, and also there is no meaning. The truth and falsities altogether become rumors and relatives." Dono described *Gamelan of Rumor* thus: "This work is the separation of truth from gossip, or fact from fiction. A discordant rhythm is set up which is like the soul of electricity within the machine."³⁰ Dono's concern about gossip and rumors can be related to Benedict Anderson's writing on direct speech, describing it as a mode of political communication playing "low" (*ngoko*) against "high" (*krama*) types of speech. *Ngoko* communication is direct, ephemeral, and hard to decipher, and is therefore appropriate for gossip and hearsay.³¹ The sounds from Dono's *gamelan* are analogous to the political rumors that are part of Indonesian life.

Diversity in Dono's work has allowed him to criticize these socio-political situation in Indonesia through metaphor and parody. *Flying Angels* (1996, cat.no.8) symbolizes hope and freedom in the Indonesian current political climate. *Wayang* puppet features are combined with found objects and the rural sounds of crickets and other insects. Ironically, these angels with mechanical hearts seem to be floating aimlessly with no destination. *Political Clowns* (1999, cat.no.9) consists of rows of fiberglass heads (Dono's self-portraits) similar to masked dramas (*wayang topeng*) linked to one another with electric circuits. These wires are connected to glass jars on the floor filled with urine energy. Like politicians, these clown's pale faces and permanent smiles cover the true personalities behind them. From tin speakers, a recorded male voice utters his love for money and desire to own the earth.³² Dono's performance also reflects the socio-political milieu. In *The Chair* (1993), masked performers pretending to be puppets dance with shadows on both sides of the screen. The puppeteer who orchestrates and pulls the strings finds out that he too is a puppet. In *Double M* (1997), half-naked performers with masks made of crackers and painted faces stun viewers with their fake breasts and erect penises. Through parody and satire, the performers criticize the monopolization of automobile manufacture by the Suharto family and Habibie's utopian dream of exporting airplanes and building nuclear plants in Java.

Transmission (Transmisi) (1999) consisted of an installation, video, and performance

fig.14 (p.24)
Heri Dono, *Double M*, 1997, performance at Biennale
Seni Rupa, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

that took place at the Tennyson power station in Queensland, Australia. It was at a time of immense anxiety, as foreign relations between Indonesia and Australia became extremely restrained. Violence and massacre in East Timor reached an uncontrollable stage, as Australian troops as part of the UN peacekeeping force were about to be sent to the island.³³ As *dalang*, Dono collaborated with performers and musicians to create in a vast, abandoned empty space the various acoustics, shadow puppets, and video installations that captivated viewers with light and sound effects. Live electronics accompanied gigantic dancing shadows and video images of puppets and soldiers. These montages with distorted sounds of clarinets and saxophones looked like macabre scenes of dancing demons and drunken deities in an orgy of death.

From *Eating Shit* to *Interrogation*

Although Dono declared that he is not interested in politics, many of his works indicate otherwise. It would be difficult to imagine that in 1995 when President Suharto was confronted by *Ceremony of the Soul*, he did not see the explicit political implications of the work. In Dono's *Blooming in Arms* (1996), frightening figures in helmets and khaki uniforms with artificial limbs are clearly related to the military abuse of power in Indonesia. Dono's writings and interviews also indicate clearly that his art stands for the suppressed and the underprivileged.³⁴ Not surprisingly, some noises of discontent were heard from the Indonesian authorities when Dono's work was shown abroad. Dono would stress that if his art is a critique on politics, then it is about ideology, not individuals. Recently, Dono has admitted that with state terror and turmoil in Indonesia, it is necessary for his art and message to communicate more directly with the audience.³⁵ Like many Indonesian artists, including Dadang Chirstanto, Moelyono, FX Harsono, Tisna Sanjaya, Eddy Hara, and Arahmaiani, Dono feels that it is no longer taboo to state explicit political contents in their oeuvre.³⁶

In retrospect, Dono's 1980s paintings already revealed social and political problems through parody and mythology.³⁷ In the guises of gods, men, and monsters, the threatening forces of megalomania, greed, and corruption are shown, as these parties are often in conflict as they fight with weapons and gnawing teeth. *Eating Shit* (1983, cat.no.10) is one of Dono's student works, and it evinces early signs of the discontent with authority and the restriction of freedom of expression. Forced to consume excretion with hands tied and a cobra coming out of his anus, the main figure evokes a sense of degradation and frustration. Dono referred to prisoners who had been forced to eat shit as punishment. He compared them to art students who were trained to paint in various styles at art institutions in Yogyakarta and Bandung. In reaction to stylistic restriction, Dono painted this work in flat mint colors. In *Episode 25* (1983), fantastic animals and monsters in candy colors are in battle as they tear apart and devour each other. In *The Suppressor* (1989, cat.no.1), a monster restrains a helpless victim with its claws as it urinates in the victim's gaping mouth. Dono's use of parody is not in any way blind, blank, or empty. On the contrary, the iconography and symbols related to mythology and *wayang* are meant to deflect or camouflage his direct comments on taboo subjects.

Dono's paintings are like stage arenas or *wayang* screens in which characters are displayed in a confined claustrophobic space. Disguised gods and demons, active conspirators, crusaders, villains, and victims intermingle in the process of metamorphosis or dismemberment. Like creatures with multiple organs, like the morphs and mutants in comic books and sci-fi films such as *Total Recall* and *X-Men*, their anomalies and hybrids are feigned and simulated. Humorous and horrific, these characters contain a phantasmal parody and double-coding similar to *ngoko* messages, which are dubious and ephemeral. This kind of eclectic mixture becomes a signification of myth that can be seen as de-politicized speech. Within this space, Dono's myth is a conjuring trick where reality is turned inside out. The function of myth is to empty reality. This empty arena is then filled

fig.15 (p.24)
Heri Dono, sketch for *Blooming in Arms*, 1995

fig.16 (p.24)
Tisna Sanjaya, *The Monument of Thirty-three Years of Thinking*, 1999, installation at the Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia

with super bad and super good characters, linking them to the fantasy world of dancing shadows. Another way of viewing Dono's work is to compare it with how writers such as Pramoedya Ananta Toer adapted *wayang* plots to feature the struggle of good to survive evil spirits.³⁸ But whereas in literary works such as Pramoedya Toer's *Awakenings*, it is clear who are the devils, Dono's characters are sometimes mixed, as good deities are turned into crafty demons.

Eating Bullets (Makan Pelor) (1992, cat.no.11), *Three Pistols in the Back* (1992, cat.no.12), and *Campaign of the Three Parties* (1992, cat.no.13) were executed at the time of relative political stability in Indonesia. The scenes show war-mongering parties fighting in frenzy and confusion. In contrast, in *Dialog with a Pistol* (1998, cat.no.14), painted towards the end Suharto's troubled regime, the characters are easily decipherable. A soldier in a red helmet with dark glasses and Badman badge is blasting two bullets into the forehead of a man holding his hands in surrender. The background reveals the riot scene in Jakarta behind raised curtains. Dono described this work: "How can honor be found through holding a dialogue via the force of weapons?"³⁹

Hindu myths feature strongly in *The Bearer of the Peace Discus* (1994, cat.no.15). Battle among grotesque beasts is disrupted as a flying goddess with a Vishnu's *cakra* (wheel) comes between them. The burly three-headed monster in military regalia and boots pissing in a glass symbolizes authoritative power against determined opponents. Dono's mythological signification anticipated the terror and turmoil that awaited the Indonesian people in the late 1990s. The resignation of Suharto as president on 21 May, 1998, brought an abrupt end to Indonesia's 32-year-old New Order regime. Four years earlier, the cover of *Far Eastern Economic Review* (September 1994) featured a caricature of smiling Suharto balancing on high-wire economy. The nepotistic culture seemed to be impossible to dispose of. Since his resignation, demonstrators have demanded that Suharto be placed trial for treason and corruption. Students wore smiling masks of Suharto at the Semanggi traffic rotary in Jakarta in protest against his crimes. Posters and cartoons depicted him as a demon with fangs.⁴⁰ During the topsy-turvy events as power changed hands from Suharto to Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie to Abdurrahman Wahid, Dono captured the rapid transitions as politicians, cronies, bankers, religious leaders, military generals, civilians, and students performed like human puppets on stage.

In *A Magician Who Never Killed* (2000, cat.no.16), the laughing magician with a decapitated head rides the Reform Order vehicle. Meanwhile, the other political power in the guise of a urinating demon tries to capture a magician in a mirror reflection and shoots him at close range through a telescope but misses. *The King Who is Afraid of Approaching Barong* (2000, cat.no.17) is a tale of a greedy king who is thrown out of power. Habibie is seen being ejecting from his seat as the volcano erupts. He is attacked by a flying Superwoman, who is symbolic of Megawati Sukarnoputri, whose grandmother was a Hindu from Bali. Barong, the Lord of the Forest, a fantastic tiger-dragon who is the protector of mankind, is pulling the chariot to expel evil forces with white magic. The figure of an opportunist rides the chariot as the dragon and Garuda fly away from the leader of the puppet regime.⁴¹ Compared with *The Barong's Imagination of the Drunkard* (1991, cat.no.18), which relates to mythology and the puppet world, *The King Who is Afraid of Approaching Barong* is clearly more direct and political. The painting depicts Habibie as a pawn under high pressure due to crisis stemming from ethnic riots, the East Timor bloodbath, and the Bank Bali scandal.

With the *ngoko* mode of speech, Dono likes to explore the playful language of the street and slang (*plesetan*) that tease and taunt (*ngeleddek*).⁴² These puns and verbal games are turned into paintings that tease out some sensational incidents in Indonesia. *The Guard Who is Keeping the Bank's Key* (2000, cat.no.19) captures the scene of Suharto's allegedly ill-begotten fortune (some US\$15 billion) which a *Time* article (May 1999) claimed the president and his family acquired during his rule.⁴³ Masked puppets confront one another. One of them as symbol of the people holds the banner of a smok-

fig.17 (p.25)
Cover of *Far Eastern Economic Review* (September 1994)

fig.18 (p.26)
Barong performance

fig.19 (p.26)
Protesters demonstrating against former president Suharto. *Asiaweek* (2 June 2000, pp.36-37)

ing Suharto. The other is Suharto's bodyguard, who has been holding the bank's key for three decades. According to Dono, the bodyguard is ordered to blow up the dynamite in his hand if anybody finds the bank key. In *Flower Diplomacy* (2000, cat.no.20), two figures talk sweetly to each other behind smiling masks. Like puppets on a stage with the curtains raised, they act out their roles, but they are ready to harm the other when sweetness becomes sour and bitter. Dono referred to the incident more than 30 years ago when Sukarno had to bestow power on Suharto, who went on to rule Indonesia under his own dictatorship.

Dono offers a cheeky and playful comment on larger-than-life icons that in reality are frivolous and pathetic figures. *Superman Still Learning How to Wear Underwear* (2000, cat.no.21) is a direct satire on the American superhero, who learns how to put on underwear the right way instead of over his tights. Dono observes that it is not just Superman who makes this ridiculous display in public but also Batman and Robin.

Interrogation (1998, cat.no.22) is one of Dono's most critical and dramatic works addressing the violence and suppression carried out during Suharto's dictatorship.⁴⁴ This video installation consists of five monitors with suspended fiberglass rifles pointing at the faces of five victims who are under interrogation. The viewer becomes witness as well as interrogator while the prisoners reveal fear and despair as they flinch at the sound of bullets. In the background, recorded scenes of riots and demonstrations in East Timor, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Santa Cruz flow in slow motion. One scene is about the raids ordered by Jakarta military leaders on opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri's headquarters on 27 July 1996. As a result, Suryadi replaced Megawati as puppet head of the party while more than 40 members of Megawati's supporters went missing. Dono's message in this work is hard and direct like a gun pointing at one's head. The message hits home as the viewer shares the heavy breathing sound of fear as distressed victims are under interrogation. In contrast, *Inner City* (1999, cat.no.23) deals with political issues through humor and absurdity. A mannequin with a fiberglass head (Dono's self portrait) stands in a *contrapposto* position, displaying his anatomical features like a classical statue. At close encounter, the viewer finds that the figure is made of different parts of borrowed objects. The handsome figure has no arms, his hands are protruding from his shoulders. Like a mutant or human-robot, a small monitor inside his chest reveals scenes of riots in Jakarta. The sign "Please look inside" written above his sexual organ invites the viewer to peep inside his red penis to witness a recording of the televised broadcast of Suharto's resignation.

When Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) became president in 1999, he inherited mounting internal problems as Indonesia faced uncertainties in political, economic, social, religious, and ethnic transitions. For instance, ethnic violence aimed at the Chinese community exploded even before Suharto left office in May 1998. Chinese neighborhoods were looted and burned while scores of ethnic Chinese women were gang-raped. Fear felt by other ethnic minorities erupted as the military massacred inhabitants in East Timor in 1999. In 2000, hundreds of people were killed in Aceh due to fighting for independence, while fighting between Muslims and Christians on the Maluku Islands have claimed thousands of lives.

When he began his presidency, Wahid had to withstand some larger-than-life icons. As the blind Muslim cleric mounted the presidential steps, the voice of a Javanese soothsayer (*dukun*) called the proceedings to a halt. The warning was that the "big man," the spirit of Suharto, was standing at the doorway. Wahid and his family waited as the soothsayer carried out a prayer ritual. Later, Wahid's daughter, Yenny, said that it was the black power of Suharto, who was trying to hurt them. There are all kinds of Supermen but in Indonesia, many of them are seen as belonging to puppetry. When asked by a puppeteer when he attended a *wayang* performance how becoming the president has affected him. Wahid replied, "I am afraid I am also a player in a larger story that I don't control. I am a puppet that will be put back in the box when I am no longer needed."⁴⁵

But as president, Wahid still pulls many of the strings that control the marionettes of *wayang* characters on the political stage. When he came under fire at the People's Consultative Assembly (MRP) in August 2000 due to his handling of religious violence in Maluku Islands and the vulnerability of the economy and the currency, he humbly apologized for the malaise of Indonesia. He promised special autonomy to Aceh and Irian Jaya, separatist provinces at opposite ends of the vast archipelago. Also, he promised to give more power to Vice-President Megawati. But Wahid could not dispel the impression of an ailing man who is leading a nation that is in danger of tearing itself apart. As one writer in *The Indonesian Observer* wrote, "Waiting on Wahid is not easy."⁴⁶

Despite creating some confrontational works on recent upheaval in Indonesia, Dono has found the *wayang* to be the best medium for capturing the topsy-turvy events that have often been complex and opaque. In *Wayang Legenda: Indonesia Baru* (2000, see pp.76,77), cartography has been incorporated as part of a *wayang* story of islands and provinces in the archipelago. Represented as strange and morbid creatures, the volcanic islands of Krakatau and Anak Krakatau erupt while Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, Bali, Lombok, Flores, Sumbawa, the Maluku Islands, Java, Irian Jaya, Papua, and Timor seem to be dancing like drunkards. It is the map and story of the new Indonesia, in which Timor is like an independent bird ready to fly to freedom—except that it has no wings. In *Lobi Lobi* (2000, see pp.78,79), Dono created superheroes, monsters, and gods to perform in the theatre of shadows and puppets. It is a world where down is up and nothing is as it seems to be. Analogous to political arenas, where lobbyists talk in sweet, flowery language, the speeches behind the facade of sweetness can turn out to be like sour fruits (*lobi*). As *dalang*, Dono does not offer a path for a new national awakening but a critique on the players in a larger story that he does not control. They are like deities and demons who seem to quarrel and fight in never-ending battles.

Dono's Demons and Deities Dancing and Drinking in Edo

As guest curator of Heri Dono's solo show at the Japan Foundation Asian Center, Tokyo, I was given the challenging task of selecting and curating this exhibition in a relatively short span of time.⁴⁷ Taking into consideration of the exhibition space and selected artworks, I had to conceptualize how viewers who come to see Dono's show in Tokyo can fully appreciate his creative force. The idea came about during my research residency at the Bellagio Study and Conference Center in Italy in March 2000 when discussing with my research colleague on international art exhibitions and how context plays a part in appreciation and understanding of artworks.⁴⁸ I felt that Dono's work should be exhibited in relation to the theme of shadows and realms. Viewers should have a sense of entering into another realm in which the boundaries of logic and absurdity are easily crossed over.

Dono explained that screens and shadows are important in life. At times, they help to cover and conceal what cannot be displayed or heard directly. For Dono, truth cannot always run like a straight course, but more like the Javanese knife (*kris*) with its wavering edge. To understand a lot of things in Indonesia, one needs to look at the world from upside down. His comment reminded me of the toy monkey in his studio that rides up the ladder with his head pointing to the floor. But then it would be too absurd to request viewers to look at Dono's exhibition with their heads turned upside down. This would result in dizziness, headache, and low attendance of the exhibition.

The architectural setting and the exhibition space determine the viewers' perception, so the idea that they should feel like entering courtyards or pavilions became the starting point for the exhibition design. The idea of indoor/outdoor led me to think of open courtyards in Indonesia.⁴⁹ *Pendopo* derives from the Sanskrit word *mandapa*, meaning a pillared hall. These pillared, open-sided halls can be found in many temples of the Singasari-Kediri-Majapahit period of 13th-15th centuries in Java, and later temples in Bali have mostly adopted this form. *Pendopos* were adapted for the courtly architecture

in evidence in the Javanese courts in Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Construction is often on raised plinths linked by staircases and surrounded by a moat and a wall. Spatial relationships can be separated between *pendopo agung*, the main *pendopo* for court ceremonies, and the *pringgitan*, a shallow hall in a similar form where dancing and *wayang kulit* performances sometimes take place.

By adapting the concept of a *pendopo-pringgitan* complex, a series of discussions between Dono, myself, the organizers, and the designers of the exhibition at the Japan Foundation were made. Meetings in Tokyo, Bangkok, New York, Amsterdam, and Yogyakarta were held to determine how this concept could be fully realized. As the exhibition design was established, the stairs and parts of the floors were raised to create a specific space that becomes Dono's realm. In fact, three realms have been loosely invented belonging to gods, humans, and demons. These realms are in the care of three brothers, Batara Guru (who reigns the gods' realm), Semar (who protects humankind) and Togog (who advises the demons).

As viewers enter the exhibition space, they walk up and down these levels, which reveal creatures, human, gods, and angels. The sounds, smells, and moving images of *wayang kulit* arouse their senses. Soon they find out that these realms are interchangeable, as these characters overflow and overlap. Humorous, devious, and frightening, their behaviors seem unpredictable. Dancing and drunk, monsters become human as deities turn to demons. They are in a realm where down is up and logic is turned upside down.

The baby toad mascots designed by Dono for this exhibition somersault in the air. They look at the world from a strange perspective. But at times, seeing life from an upside down position can be refreshing and make a lot more sense. Dono's tongue-in-cheek creation of these tiny toads is meant to tease as well as remind us that often fact and logic are not as they seem to be. In fact, these teasing toads with bulging hearts might not be mascots but monsters. They could even be related to Venusaur (Fushigibana) or Poliwrath (Nyorobon), the Pokemon (Poket Monsters) monsters that await to be caught and manipulated like puppets by Pokemon trainers such as Ash (Satoshi).⁵⁰ After all in the realms of Dono, demons and deities often look alike.

Bangkok, 17 August 2000

fig.20 (p.29)

Heri Dono, sketch for the mascot of the solo exhibition at the Japan Foundation Asia Center, Tokyo, 2000

Notes

1. David Elliott and Gilane Tawadros (eds.), *Heri Dono* (London and Oxford: Institute of International Visual Arts and Museum of Modern Art Oxford, 1996), p.38.
2. See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Harper Collins, 1973), pp.132-140. Geertz gives useful insight on the Indonesian shadow-puppet play as a deeply rooted art form as well as a religious rite. He makes direct comparison between the characters of Semar and Falstaff. In his section on "Ritual and Social Change: A Javanese Example," Geertz refers to B. Malinowski's *Magic, Science and Religion* (1948) on how religion satisfies the individual's demand for a stable, comprehensible, and coercible world. The *wayang kulit* has been applied to promote stability through education, faith, and government control.
3. *Rasa* refers to the traditional Javanese five senses: seeing, hearing, talking, smelling, and feeling. Feeling is further elaborated into taste on the tongue, touch on the body, and emotional feeling within the heart, such as sadness and happiness.
4. Jayadeva Tilakasiri, *The Asian Shadow Play* (Ratamalana: Vishva Lekha Publication, 1999), pp.62-127.
5. In *wayang revolusi* and *wayang suluh* portraits of political leaders in modern attire are depicted and displayed in shadow-puppet theatre. The Tropen Museum in Amsterdam contains some fine examples of these works. See Museumgids, "Wayang Revolusi" (Amsterdam: Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 1995), pp.40-41.
6. Astri Wright, "Drinking from the Cup of Tradition: Modern Art in Yogyakarta," *Indonesian Modern Art: Indonesian Painting since 1945* (Amsterdam: The Gate Foundation, 1993), pp.39-56.
7. Astri Wright, *Soul, Spirit and Mountain: Preoccupations of Contemporary Indonesian Painters* (Kuala Lumpur: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.169-170.
8. Brita Miklouho-Maklai, *Exposing Society's Wounds: Some Aspects of Contemporary Indonesian Art since 1966* (Adelaide: Flinders University, 1991), pp.23-77. Apinan Poshyananda, "'Con Art' seen from the Edge: The Meaning of Conceptual Art in South and Southeast Asia," *Global Conceptualism: Points of Origin, 1950s-1980s* (New York: Queens Museum of Art, 1999), pp.142-148.

9. During 1994-2000, I have visited Dono's studio and interviewed him in Yogyakarta on several occasions.
10. Statement by Dono in *Mythical Monsters in Contemporary Society* (Singapore: Gajah Gallery, 1998), p.2.
11. From the French word *bricole*, which roughly translates as putting things together in a manner of improvisation. Some dictionaries define it as pottering about, doing odd jobs. This word has often been used in the context the readymade art. *Bricoleur* can be translated as handyman, to be good around the house, or to be good craftsman. See Charles Merewether, "Fabricating Mythologies: The Art of Bricolage," *The Boundary Rider, 9th Biennale of Sydney* (Sydney: Biennale of Sydney, 1992), pp.20-24.
12. Jim Supangkat, "Heri Dono," *The First Asia-Pacific Triennial* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 1993), p.13.
13. Thomas McEvelly, "Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief," *Art & Otherness: Crisis in Cultural Identity* (New York: McPherson Publishers, 1992), pp.27-56. McEvelly criticizes methods of art history and curatorship, in which non-Western art and primitive art are interpreted as validating the universal values of Western modern art.
14. Kirk Varnedoe, "Gauguin," in William Rubin (ed.), "Primitivism" in *20th Modern Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984), pp.186-187.
15. Julie Ewington, "Between the Cracks: Art and Method in Southeast Asia," *ART AsiaPacific*, vol.3, no.4, 1996, pp. 57-63. Ewington gives insightful observations on the interpretation and methods of Southeast Asian visual arts, using example of *wayang kulit* and works by Dono in her rich discussion.
16. Robert Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Art* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1966), pp.192-214.
17. Michael Macintyre, "Tribal Lands of Indonesia: The World of Shadows," *Spirit of Asia* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1980), pp.11-15.
18. Benedict Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp.152-173.
19. Dono, "Life is a Cartoon," *New Art from Southeast Asia 1992* (Tokyo: The Japan Foundation, 1992), pp.117-119.
20. Jean-Hubert Martin, *5th Biennale d'Art Contemporain de Lyon: Partage d'Exoticismes* (Lyon: Biennale de Lyon, 2000), pp.41-52.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Interview with Sigit Sukasman, 10 August 2000, Yogyakarta. Sukasman gave an elaborate explanation on his method of making *wayang kulit*. He stressed that exaggeration of physiognomy and facial expression of his shadow puppets allow them to communicate more directly with viewers. However, traditional puppet makers might regard his work as too experimental. Sukasman discussed the *wayang* characters Arjuna, Semar, and Togog, and demonstrated his experiments with colored lights and shadow puppets on stage. See the pamphlet, *Wayang Ukur Sukasman* (Yogyakarta: Pondok Seni Sukasman, 2000).
23. Dono's statement, *4th Asian Art Show Fukuoka* (Fukuoka: Fukuoka Art Museum, 1994), pp.82-83. For Dono's discussion on his inspiration by *wayang kulit*, see David Elliott and Gilane Tawadros (eds.), *Heri Dono*, pp.36-37.
24. Dono was inspired by the Batakese tale of the magic wands, which was an outcome of incestuous love between a twin brother and sister whose living souls were confined in petrified wooden forms. The magic wand was carved from these woods. A kidnapped boy was buried up to his neck and fed with food and later with molten lead. His brain was taken to prepare a magical substance, *pupuk*, which was then placed inside the wand. Such stories differ enormously from traditional *wayang kulit*.
25. Interview with Dono, 22 April 2000, New York.
26. Jean de Loisy, "La Bauté in Fabula," *La Bauté* (Avignon: La Mission 2000 en France, 2000).
27. Heri Dono, *Kuda Binal* (Yogyakarta: Alun Alun Utara, 29 July 1992).
28. Apinan Poshyananda, "Roaring Tigers, Desperate Dragons," *Traditions /Tensions: Contemporary Art in Asia* (New York: The Asia Society, 1996), pp.30-31. Like the theatre for the dead, *Fermentation of Mind and Ceremony of the Soul* can be compared to the Toraja effigies of the deceased in cliff graves in Sulawesi.
29. Interview with Dono, 28 April 1995, Jakarta. Dono said that during the installation of his work he was frequently questioned by the official organizers of the exhibition regarding the meaning and use of military decorations on the stone sculptures. He was not allowed to enter the galleries while Suharto and other dignitaries were viewing the exhibition.
30. For further discussion on *Gamelan of Rumor*, see Martinus Dwi Marianto, "The Experimental Artist Heri Dono from Yogyakarta and His 'Visual Art' Religion," *Art Monthly Australia*, October 1993, no.64, pp.21-24.
31. Anderson, *Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia*, pp.152-153.
32. Interview with Dono, 10 August 2000, Yogyakarta. Dono explained that the sound from the speakers is by his friend, whose voice sounds like Suharto speaking.
33. During September 1999, at the time of opening events of the Third Asia-Pacific Triennial and *Transmission* performance in Queensland, an Australian army was leading a strong peacekeeping force of 7,000 troops to East Timor. One Indonesian magazine published a cover with a picture of an Australian bayonet buried in East Timor and a map labeled "Kangaroo Domino Game."
34. See Dono's statements and captions in *Mythical Monsters in Contemporary Society*.
35. Interview with Dono, 10 August 2000.
36. See catalogues *AWAS! Recent Art from Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Cemeti Art Foundation, 1999), and *The Third Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 1999). For example, Tisna Sanjaya's *Thirty Two Years of Think with the Knees* (1999) depicts Habibie ecstatically licking the hand of Suharto. Surrounding the painting are T-shirts of Aceh and East Timor for sale and bamboo sculptures of men with erect torsos/pointed guns standing on their head.
37. For discussion of Dono's paintings, see Marianto, "The Experimental Artist Heri Dono from Yogyakarta and His 'Visual Art' Religion," *Art Monthly Australia*, pp.21-24; Wright, *Soul, Spirit and Mountain*, pp.233-239; Jim Supangkat, "Heri Dono," *Southeast Asian Art Today* (Singapore: Roeder Publications, 1996), pp.17-26; and Esmeralda and Marc Bollansee, *Masterpieces of Contemporary Indonesian Painters* (Singapore: Times Editions, 1997).
38. David Myers, "Politics and Intellectual Artists in Contemporary Indonesia: The World of Pramoedyana Ananta Toer and Mochtar Lubis," in David Myers (ed.), *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the Asia-Pacific* (Darwin: Northern Territory Press), pp.137-153.
39. See Dono's statements and captions in *Mythical Monsters in Contemporary Society*.

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40. See Jose Manuel Tesoro, "Open But Not Shut," *Asiaweek* (2 June 2000), pp.36-37. For writing on Indonesian culture of fear and the post-Suharto era, see Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, *Stability and Unity: On a Culture of Fear* (Bangkok: Forum Asia, 1995) and Adam Schwarz and Johnathan Paris (eds.), *The Politics of Post-Suharto Indonesia* (Singapore: The Council of Foreign Relations, 1999), respectively.
41. Permadi, a soothsayer, has said that when Habibie became president, he did not have the *wahyu*, or divine blessing. Dono explained that the dragon is the Chinese symbol indicating the rise of Asians in the year 2000. The Garuda with shoes falling down the volcano signifies Indonesian authority. In this case, the mythological figure could mean the army divisions supporting General Wiranto and General Prabowo Subianto, Suharto's son-in-law.
42. For discussion on *ngeledak* in recent Indonesian art, see Martinus Dwi Marianto, "Teasing Through Art," *AWAS! Recent Art from Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: Cemeti Art Foundation, 1999), pp.42-53.
43. Suharto denied this accusation, stating that he hardly has any money. On 8 August 2000, the Head of the State Prosecutor's Office Barman Zahir put forward a file and indictment to charge Suharto with violations of the law related to corruption and abuse of power. If proven guilty, he could face life imprisonment. See Anthony Spaeth, "Don't Cry for Suharto," *The Time* (19 June 2000), pp.18-19.
44. Executed shortly before Suharto's resignation, Dono informed that in this work he wanted to be most direct, as there was no room for humor.
45. Terry McCarthy, "Democrat...or Boss?" *The Time* (17 July 2000), pp.34-35; and Jose Manuel Tesoro, "Defiant Under Fire," *Asiaweek* (4 August 2000), pp.32-33. This article quoted Indonesian political analyst Soedjati Djiwandono as saying that, "in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is still king."
46. Roeslan Abdulgani, "Waiting on Wahid Is Not Easy," *The Indonesian Observer* (11 August 2000), p.5.
47. I take this opportunity to thank the Japan Foundation for this kind invitation. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Ms. Yasuko Furuichi and her assistants for their tireless efforts in realizing this project.
48. I would like to thank Dr. Vishakha Desai, vice-president of the Asia Society, New York, for her kind advice on Indian and Indonesian religious and court architecture. Discussion on this topic at Villa Serbelloni by Lake Como was most exhilarating. I also wish to extend my thanks to Mr. David Elliott, director of Moderna Museet, Stockholm, for his stimulating contribution on Dono's work during our discussion in Amsterdam on 15 July 2000.
49. Helen Ibbitson Jessup, *Court Arts of Indonesia* (New York: The Asia Society Galleries, 1990), pp.105-123.
50. I would like to thank my son, Pirawuth Poshyananda, for introducing me to hundreds of Pokemon monsters. Logic and reality have never been the same since.

