

with HD VOICE Samsung GALAXY S4 \$0 SmartSurf HD Plus

SmartSurf HD PLUS

- Free 24-month 4G SmartAccess
- Free 3-month International Roaming

Unlimited Call & SMS Speed Boost, 75Mbps LTE \$88/month

StarHub Business Solutions TnCs Apply

Advertise on NYTimes.com

Indonesian Street Artist Mixes Pop With Questions of Identity



Courtesy of Eko Nugroho and Singapore Tyler Print Institute

"Eruption of Corruption," part of a photo series by the Indonesian artist Eko Nugroho, who often uses masks as a motif in his work.

By SONIA KOLESNIKOV-JESSOP
Published: September 17, 2013

Back in January, Louis Vuitton asked the Indonesian street artist Eko Nugroho to help design a new scarf. The luxury brand has become a master of these kind of collaborations, which have come to be known as “artketing” — combining the world of fine art with mass consumer marketing — but it has tended toward artists who are more established internationally, like Takashi Murakami, Richard Prince and most recently Yayoi Kusama. The decision to select Mr. Nugroho was a sign of his quick rise.

Connect With Us on Twitter

Follow @nytimesarts for arts and entertainment news.



Arts Twitter List: Critics, Reporters and Editors

Arts & Entertainment Guide

A sortable calendar of noteworthy cultural events in the New York

It’s not the only one. This year, Mr. Nugroho, 36, who recently made the list of Art + Auction magazine’s “Top 50 under 50,” is participating in the Indonesian Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, which runs through Nov. 24.

Mr. Nugroho mixes pop influences with Indonesian motifs and touches on issues of identity and democracy.

For the Louis Vuitton collaboration, Mr. Nugroho created six large oil paintings, with the brand selecting one for production — “Republik Tropis,” which portrays a mythical

FACEBOOK

TWITTER

GOOGLE+

SAVE

E-MAIL

SHARE

PRINT

REPRINTS



Log in to see what your friends are sharing on nytimes.com. Privacy Policy | What's This? Log In With Facebook

What's Popular Now

How to Fall in Love With Math



Gunman and 12 Victims Killed in Shooting at D.C. Navy Yard



Upgrade your driving skills with Alex Yoong right in the heart of Orchard Road from 3rd to 6th October.

Sign-up Now



Replay

Advertise on NYTimes.com

MOST E-MAILED

RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

1. Miss World Finals in Doubt After Indonesian Protests

2. A Shark Prowling the Ocean Floor



3. OBSERVATORY Male Orangutans Found to Share Travel Plans

4. T MAGAZINE Gallery | A Ceramics Book, and a Ceramicist, That Break the Mold



5. Maybe This Is Why Warhol Stuck to Soup Cans

6. Events on Long Island

7. Events in New Jersey



8. ARTS REVIEW | CONNECTICUT High Seriousness, Low Humor

9. ART

region, selected by Times critics.

[Go to Event Listings »](#)

[Enlarge This Image](#)



Courtesy of Eko Nugroho and Singapore Tyler Print Institute

"Faith in Shopping" by Eko Nugroho.

creature whose body is made of tropical fruits and vegetables, with two masked faces peering through the twisted amalgamation.

"This creature is like a compilation of the democratic idea in Indonesia, colorful and complicated, a symbol of today's society," Mr. Nugroho said in a recent interview in Singapore. "Our democracy is still very young, not fixed yet."

Masks are integral to Mr. Nugroho's visual vocabulary, and he started using them in his practice in 2000. In Indonesia, he said, they are "more about the concept of identity and the concealment of your true human nature."

Mr. Nugroho is part of a generation of artists that emerged as the dictatorial Suharto regime was falling and Indonesia was slowly transitioning toward democracy; and from the start, he has used his works to communicate and engage with a general public, particularly through street art.

"I like to develop my work outside during daylight. It's more free and flexible and it allows me to interact with people, sometime asking them to help," he said. For his new solo exhibition, called "We Are What We Mask," which opened at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute last week, masks take center stage. Inspired by Gillian Vogelsang-Eastwood and Willem Vogelsang's "Covering the Moon: An Introduction to Middle Eastern Face Veils," which retraces the history of veils, Mr. Nugroho has created 70 colorful paper works, many of which are wearable. They include a series of 10 flat masks that take on the shape of the head covering worn by the women of the Rashaida tribe in Saudi Arabia, and a series of eight full-face head pieces in absurd shapes and bright neon hues that were made from abaca cotton paper treated with konnyaku, a form of Japanese root-based gelatin, to add strength. All these "face veils" include text like "obey and happy" and "prohibited to prohibited" that take on a specific meaning within the Singaporean context where they were created.

"I like strong visuals. I've never used such strong colors before, sometime they are hurting the eyes, but the underlying idea is still about democracy and the freedom," he said.

Dan Cameron, the chief curator at the Orange County Museum of Art in California, noted in his essay for the Singapore Tyler Print Institute's exhibition catalog: "For all his potential for caustic observation and critique, Eko is an extremely funny and inventive artist, whose animated forms and characters locate him about midway on the scale between Kenny Scharf and Takashi Murakami, with an added dimension of playful gore to bring it into the contemporary visual idiom of zombies and apocalyptic fantasy." Mr. Nugroho is also participating in the 2013 California-Pacific Triennial, running through Nov. 17, which Mr. Cameron curated.

Mr. Nugroho's works were completed during a six-week residency that challenged the technical capabilities of the Singapore institute's workshop, as it was the first time staff there had sewn paper and assembled such complex forms.

"There is a magic in transforming a two-dimensional surface into a three-dimensional object, so one of the significant achievements was making paper which is strong, durable, yet flexible to make these fabric-like mask pieces," said the Singapore institute's chief printer, Eitaro Ogawa, who added that "we worked intensely with wood carvings for this project to give a new boldness and unique character to Eko's line imagery, usually drawn by the artist in brushstrokes."

As an additional challenge to the Singapore institute's staff, Mr. Nugroho asked them to each select their favorite head piece and arrange for themselves to be photographed



One Artist, Several Scenes



10. Legal Tussle Over Statue Turns Nasty

Log in to discover more articles based on what you've read.

[Log In](#)

[Register Now](#)

[f Log In](#)

[What's This?](#) | [Don't Show](#)



How to Tell the Fashion Future?

ALSO IN GLOBAL FASHION »

[Jewelry Designs by Women's Hands](#)

[Countdown to Fashion Week: Model Casting About for Character](#)

[The New York Times](#) [International Herald Tribune](#)



The New York Times

The new Times experience designed for Android™

[Download Now](#)

Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

StarHub TVB Awards 2013

Catch it on 28 Sept 2013, 7.30pm

Get Your Tickets To The Award Show!

www.starhubtvbawards2013.com/ticket

wearing it in everyday Singaporean scenes – riding the MRT subway, waiting in line at a taxi stand or at a food center. The resulting photographs are also on view.

The coming months will be busy for the artist: He is opening a solo show in October at Arario Gallery in Seoul, and has plans for a solo show at the Lombard Freid Gallery in New York next year. “The new work at Arario is going to be totally different, black and white, so quite a big change,” he said. For New York, he’s hoping to explore more installation works, with video and murals. “I like to be part of the landscape,” he said with a laugh.

A version of this article appears in print on September 18, 2013, in The International Herald Tribune.

SAVE E-MAIL SHARE

Get Free E-mail Alerts on These Topics

Art

Indonesia

LVMH Moet Hennessy Louis Vuitton SA

Ads by Google

what's this?

Japan Luxury Condominium

Invest in Freehold condo in Tokyo & Osaka from \$0.5mil Attractive yield
sumitomo-rd.com.sg

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



OPINION »



Op-Ed: Let the Poor Have Fun

BUSINESS »



Wooing, and Resenting, Chinese Tourists

WORLD »



Army and Christians Tread Carefully in Egypt

SCIENCE »



The Rational Choices of Crack Addicts

OPINION »

If the State Department Eclipses the Pentagon

Room for Debate asks what is lost when the secretary of state takes the lead in calling for military intervention.

N.Y. / REGION »



A Town-Gown Clash Over Public Services

© 2013 The New York Times Company | Site Map | Privacy | Your Ad Choices | Advertise | Terms of Sale | Terms of Service | Work With Us | RSS | Help | Contact Us | Site Feedback

MORE IN ARTS (1 OF 31 ARTICLES)

Movie Review: The Woman Who Knew Too Much

Read More »