

ARNDT

Eko Nugroho's Masked Identities in Singapore

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SINGAPORE — Hidden identities and the roles people play in society are explored in Indonesian contemporary artist **Eko Nugroho**'s latest show, "We Are What We Mask," at the [Singapore Tyler Print Institute](#) (STPI).

Masks recur in the exhibition, most strikingly in the form of paper sculptures of huge headpieces — works that make the wearer look like futuristic shamans, psychedelic astronauts, or in one case, having three heads stacked upon each other.

In another section, there are photographs that show people wearing the artist's specially designed masks in public spaces — queuing for a taxi, sitting on the train or having a meal. Continuing the creative mask theme, the exhibition closes with a series of relief prints featuring cartoon-like figures wearing elaborate, architectural headgear.

Eko is the latest in a long list of international artists-in-residence at STPI, an 11-year-old print-and-paper-making institute and gallery. Artists typically stay a few months in an apartment in the gallery, and create works-on-paper with the help of STPI's experts.

Eko created more than 70 pieces in his five-week residency. Noted for his playful style, which is heavily influenced by comics, the Yogyakarta-based artist is one of the most prominent contemporary practitioners in Indonesia, and is collected and exhibited internationally. His street-style graphics also recently made it onto a **Louis Vuitton** scarf.

He tells **Blouin ARTINFO** that masked superheroes were one of the inspirations for his exhibition, together with expressive faces of the puppets in *wayang kulit*, or traditional Indonesian shadow puppetry. A closer look may reveal other influences: Mexican *lucha libre* wrestling masks, Muslim veils, and biohazard protective headgear.

The vibrant, noisy political scene of contemporary Indonesia — a country with more than 230 million people spread out over 17,000 islands — is also another touchstone. Slogans such as "Obey and Happy" (sic), "Fake Democracy" and "Corruption is the New Hope" (sic), recur in several pieces. A pink head dress that has multiple eyeballs sewn on, references ideas of surveillance and control.

His time in Singapore is also reflected in his works. The iconic Merlion — the city-state's mascot — has several cameos, including as a towering mask in a print, and as a design on a flat, burqa-inspired mask.

He says that the bright colors he works with reflect the dynamism of Indonesia's brand of freedom. He says: "Democracy is full of color. Sometimes they are too bright, too strong, but when you put them together, they look nice."

As such, colors also spill over to the gallery walls. Eko has covered them with exuberant murals depicting magical, floating creatures and disembodied space boys.

"We Are What We Mask" runs at the Singapore Tyler Print Institute until October 9. For more information, click [here](#).

See more at: <http://sea.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/956728/video-eko-nugrohos-masked-identities-in-singapore#sthash.9B6h01MS.dpuf>