

Inspired by a gas cylinder blast

Entang Wiharso looks at small events to address bigger issues in his works, a complex web of human forms and political text

Deepika Shetty
Arts Correspondent

Leading Indonesian artist Entang Wiharso's detailed installations often draw on everyday aspects of life. A gas cylinder filled with fake red flowers, for example, is meant to address broader themes such as that of fakes.

His intricate installations are a complex web of human forms and politically charged text.

At first glance, the artworks look very busy, but on closer examination, the viewer is drawn into a moving meditation on the human condition. These, the artist says, are meant to show how society, culture and politics are "tied in an intricate web".

His solo show *Trilogy*, now on at ARNDT Gallery in Gillman Barracks, is a continuing examination of many of these recurring themes in his art that have gained him international recognition.

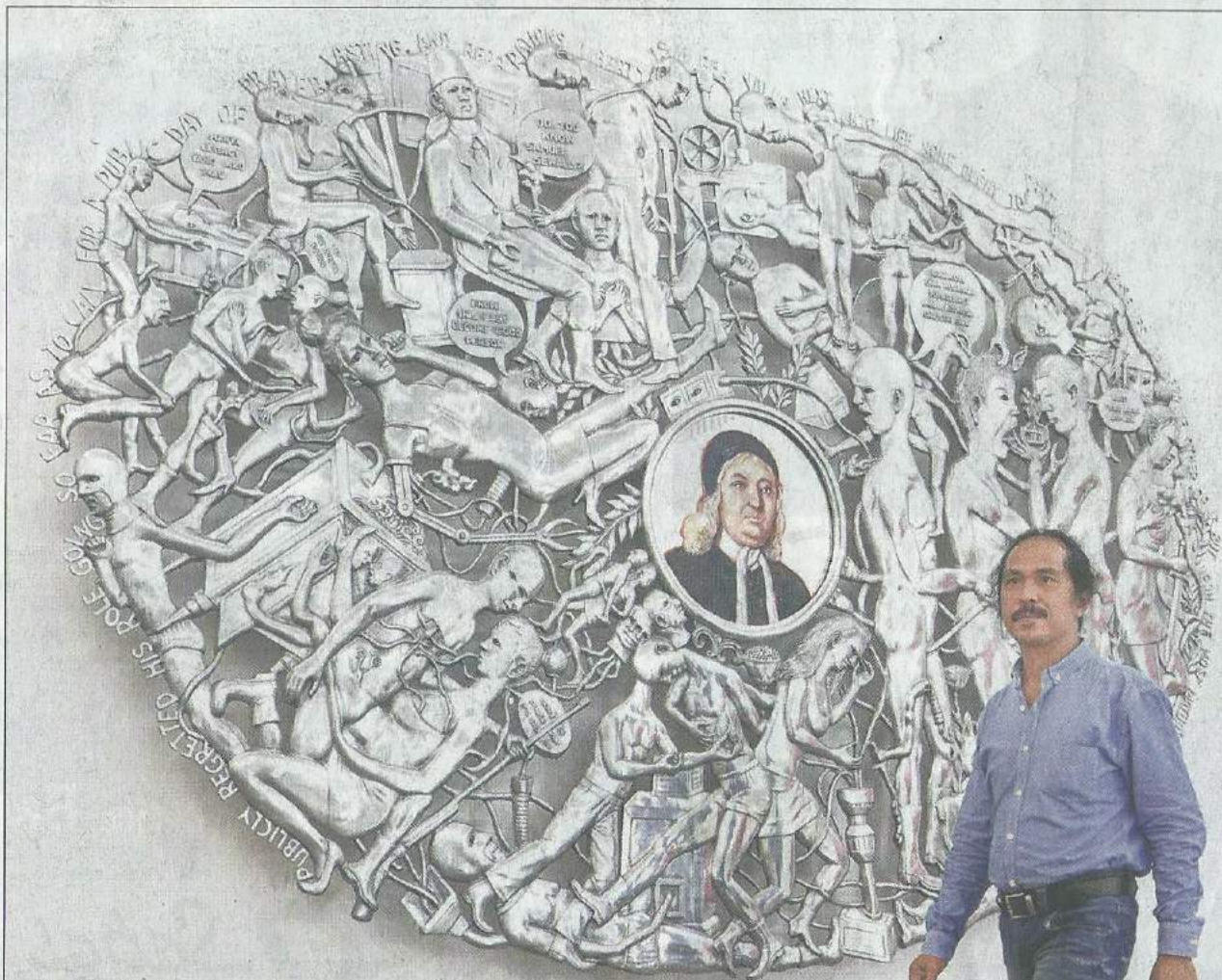
Last year, he was one of the artists who represented Indonesia at the prestigious Venice Biennale, the world's leading contemporary art event.

The charming, soft-spoken artist, who divides his time between his homes in Yogyakarta and Rhode Island, tells *Life!* his art is "a response to major events and happenings in Indonesia".

He says: "Often when people visit Indonesia for the first time, they are struck by the sheer chaos. But in that chaos, there is order. Many cities in Indonesia have lots of people. Which is why in many of my installations you see people portrayed very close to one another. Almost like they cannot be separated."

Indeed, his human forms are often portrayed as being too close for comfort, yet they seem to have a perfect space for themselves.

You can see it in his most recent 220x330cm installation titled *Perfect Mirror*. The bewitching mixed-media work, which uses oil on mirror,



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You can see it in his most recent 220x330cm installation titled *Perfect Mirror*. The bewitching mixed-media work, which uses oil on mirror, aluminium and thread, has inscriptions, images and human forms which are connected through the use of ornamental vegetation and elements drawn from landscapes.

"It is a reflection of the many things that bind us in everyday life," says the 46-year-old artist, who is married and has two sons aged 11 and nine.

His installations are evocative of temple reliefs while his smaller sculptures are full of textures and colours. Together, they challenge the viewer with their multiple perspectives. They address themes ranging from the challenges of everyday life to living in densely populated cities. The decorative backgrounds are a nod to Indonesia's rich craft traditions, including that of batik.

One work that stands out is a smaller sculpture titled *Fake And Real - Live Together Forever*.

Modelled like a gas cylinder, this piece was inspired by a real gas cylinder explosion in his kitchen in Yogyakarta. "One part of my kitchen was charred. Fully black. Our kitchen could have burnt down and the image haunted me," he says.

The problem happened because some people were supplying cylinders filled with fake gas that resulted in explosions such as the one in his kitchen.

"It got me thinking - what is real and what is fake? How can we tell? Sometimes it looks so real from the outside but the inside is fake."

His charred gas cylinder comes complete with fake flowers and figures that are a comment on the double standards of governance as well. The artist questions how such a "fake" (defective) cylinder



can arrive in homes looking like the real thing when there are supposed to be systems in place to keep households safe.

The artist, who studied painting at the fine art department of the Indonesian Institute of Arts in Yogyakarta, feels artists need to comment on the often "complex" nature of his country. "I like to look at small events, small incidents such as a gas cylinder explosion to address bigger themes."

Shaping his art are often what may seem like insignificant aspects of life, to some.

He says he draws inspiration from everything around him, including clothes, daggers and the plants in his garden.

"I am inspired by these things. I am inspired by people and their everyday struggles. I think this is what makes my art real. It is grounded in reality."

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View it

TRILOGY BY ENTANG WIHARSO

Where: ARNDT Singapore, 01-35, 22 Lock Road, Gillman Barracks

When: Till May 4, 11am to 7pm (Wednesdays to Saturdays), 11am to 6pm (Sundays), closed on Mondays, Tuesdays and public holidays

Admission: Free

Info: Call 6734-0775

Play built on mythical

Corrie Tan

Like many people around the world, playwright-director Hemang Nandabalan Yadav, 35, closely followed the furor surrounding the troubled 2010 Commonwealth Games in India.

'A year before the sporting event, the building of infrastructure, such as the swimming venue and flyovers for transport, was very far behind in schedule.

Yadav tells *Life!*: "So many people had such strong opinions about it, because on the one hand, there was all that talk of India being a new superpower, and then the disappointment when it couldn't live up to that image by creating all the necessary facilities."

Amid allegations of security

