

CUT  
THE MOUNTAIN  
AND  
LET IT FLY

*Cut The Mountain And Let It Fly*

12 JULY 2023

Looking back on Eko Nugroho's (b. 1977, Yogyakarta, Indonesia) more than two-decades long practice as an artist, from the early days of bombing graffiti murals throughout the streets of Yogyakarta, working with young artist communities to publish free-to-copy comics (DGTMB), to gradually thereafter exhibiting his work in more formal exhibitions in art spaces locally and internationally, blurring boundaries between "high" and "low" art in the contemporary art context, to eventually then work with international biennales and institutions to create more expansive works for different scales of audiences. The iconic graphical—and often satirical—visual language Nugroho employs in his work incorporates references originally derived from street art, science fiction as well as comic books, belies the nuanced, multilayered intricacies of his message, developing throughout the years parallel to the development of the young democracy that is Indonesia. *Cut The Mountain And Let It Fly* is a presentation of works by Nugroho mostly made in the past 5 years that speak about the complex contemporary culture and sociopolitical circumstances unique to Indonesia as a growing democracy, while also considering the fundamental human nature at the core of our existence. Though the exhibition presents consistently Nugroho's own longstanding visual language which involves UFOs, humanoid figures, eyes looking in different directions, as well as formulations of ornament as metaphors for our own social circumstances, there is a certain maturity to the aesthetic expression through the reformulation of his previous aesthetic concepts. In his figurative forms, the artist again makes it very ambiguous as to who the protagonists and villains are in the story he weaves for the show.

The title of the show, *Cut The Mountain And Let It Fly*, refers to Nugroho's largest site-specific mural to date made in 2009

for *Biennale de Lyon: The Spectacle of the Everyday*, which consists of a levitating mountain sliced in two, in which Nugroho was "wondering about the loaded meanings embedded in the words democracy, unity, and bureaucracy; will they continue to 'haunt' each other and are they always one-sided? [His] dream is to be able to cut the mountain and release it into space." It is perhaps a response to the age-old question of "how can one move a mountain?" The text *Cut The Mountain And Let It Fly* reemerges in a new sculpture—*Everyone Building Hope*—in which a figure is depicted as wearing a t-shirt containing it. It is as if the figure wears the t-shirt as a novelty, like a band shirt, for something that has happened in the past, while the four eyes the viewer can see underneath the colorful ornamental mask seems to be pondering, looking into the future. The figure perhaps provides an account for the attitude by which the artist considers simultaneously what he has made in the past, while considering the manifest possibility of what is to come.

*Cut The Mountain And Let It Fly* seems to allude as well to Indonesia's own modern art history and the significance by which the idyllic representation of landscapes depicting mountains by Raden Saleh, du Chattel, and van der Does, among others, in the tradition of Mooi Indie (dutch for Beautiful Indies) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century played a significant role in terms of constructing an image of "Eden", inviting European travelers to take the long boat ride to Indonesia to experience its majesty. The reality of the actual state is, obviously, much more intricate and nuanced than these portrayals may represent. In cutting the proverbial "mountain" then, perhaps what Nugroho is suggesting is a certain shaking off of tradition and historicity in order to progress? What is the context of today's "mountain"? And how, then, can it be cut?

A new body of twelve sculptures by Nugroho—*Half Hero Half Stone*—hints at a proposition. Formally, the works take the form of a diverse array of striking monochromatic figurative busts placed upon raw concrete pedestals of varying heights and scales, which resemble the exposed cement pillars in ROH's gallery architecture. Many of the figures are, in fact, representations of previous sculptures Nugroho has made since the early days of his practice, that have now been spread throughout the world in various collections and museums. There are perhaps two broad ways to look at this body of work. The first of which is to consider the recontextualization, or transformation, of Nugroho's previous sculptures placed together within ROH's Gallery Apple. In some ways, there seems to be a reprisal, or homage, towards Nugroho's own practice as an artist up to the present moment. This is however tapered by the feeling that staying solely in the past may result in stasis, to turn

paralyzed like stone. If the achievements of the past were to be considered a "mountain" of sorts, to be on one hand memorialized and celebrated, perhaps the only way to transcend the mountain is to cut it, to move forward unabated by the past? Nugroho also intends another interpretation, represented by the titles of the works, which contain broader social concepts such as *Justice*, *Tolerance*, *Advancement*, *Diversity*, and *Equality*. Any of these concepts, when taken to the fullest breadth of meaning, seem to provide from the outset the basic conditions for utopia. But Nugroho considers an excess of justice, for instance, as a possibility of creating deficiency in other things such as tolerance. It is perhaps also very difficult, or impossible, to imagine objective notions of the above concepts. And it is in the subjectivity of these virtues that exists possibilities for these "heroes" to become "stones" that hamper progress. Is the act of cutting the mountain then to look for midpoints between extremes?

Underneath Gallery Orange's skylight is a site-specific, monumental, sculpture depicting a five-legged robot holding a spherical exoskeleton entitled *We Are Human*. The painterly patina on the surface of the sculpture suggests that that the robot figure has weathered an arduous lifetime and has been rusted and corroded accordingly due to external circumstances. Several eyes peek through various orifices in the spherical structure through pink-hued windows scattered throughout the sculpture. The sculpture alludes to the notion of contemporary human life in which people's "eyes" are able to look at many different directions simultaneously through the use of technology, providing accelerated means to discover and absorb knowledge. In today's technologically driven world, it becomes easy to get lost in the virtual realm and inadvertently become isolated from the surrounding physical world. While technology and social media have undoubtedly brought numerous benefits, there are also inherent dangers that can make people feel disconnected and isolated.

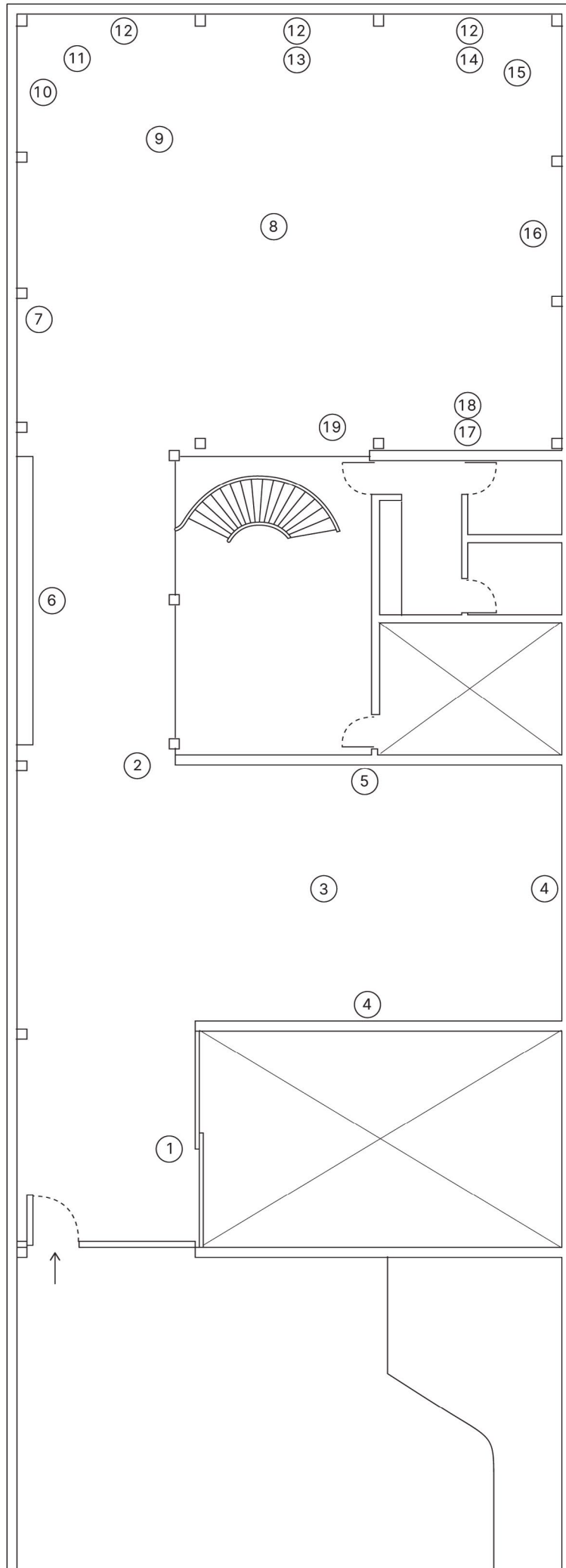
One of the primary concerns is the illusion of connection that social media creates. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram offer the ability to connect with others on a global scale. However, these interactions often lack the depth and richness of real-life connections. People tend to curate their lives online, presenting an idealized version of themselves while filtering out the less glamorous aspects. This constant exposure to carefully crafted images and stories can lead to feelings of inadequacy, as individuals compare their own lives to the seemingly perfect lives of others. Countless hours spent scrolling through news feeds, engaging in online debates, or watching short format videos, come at the expense of human interaction. The constant availability

of technology can also lead to a lack of mindfulness and presence. People often find themselves distracted by their smartphones or other devices, even when in the company of others. This detachment from the present moment can prevent us from fully appreciating our surroundings and connecting with the people we are physically with, further exacerbating feelings of isolation.

In dialogue with *We Are Human*, Nugroho has created a new site-specific black and white mural that envelops Gallery Orange as a backdrop for the narratives contained within the exhibition. Mountainous figures and forms that take inspiration from nature seem to act in movement and conflict with each other. An unidentified limb from one of the creatures extends from one side of the image to the other, appearing to assault or “cut” another figure on the right side of the composition, which itself is attempting to defend itself and resist this attack. The composition resembles in terms of its massive scale and compositional structure a battle between legendary monsters, or kaiju, in a classic Godzilla film in the 1950s, rendered in black and white due to technological limitations of the time. There is perhaps a consideration for an inner struggle that Nugroho is himself conveying due to the anomalous nature of the metaphorical “mountain”, and how the act of “cutting” something so ingrained within a psyche may not be so easily removed after all.

Interspersed throughout the entire gallery are new sculptures, paintings, embroideries as well as works on paper that express the breadth of Eko Nugroho’s expansive practice and considers the entirety of the space as a single installation. Many of the life-sized figurative sculptures discuss labor and its relation to human lives as a potential device for enslavement. This situation is perhaps exacerbated further by the social climates presented by the digital economy and the evermore blurring between labor and leisure. Many of the sculptures are adorned with masks that add multiple layers of complexity of interpretation to them. An embroidery that Nugroho has included for the exhibition *Tak Ada Mati* (There is No Death), was a response to a short story by Eka Kurniawan, an important fiction writer, which refers in its composition a relationship between two figures and constructs an imaginary mind map of possibilities regarding their interactions. The artwork then became a book cover for a compilation of short stories published in 2018. It is in this complex, multilayered interrelationship of aesthetic ideas that Nugroho composes an intricate universe for the audience to encounter, feel, and consider their own relationship to their external worlds.

FLOOR PLAN



- 1  
*Social Layer*  
2022  
Embroidered painting  
278 × 162 cm
- 2  
*Becoming Stone and Blooming*  
2023  
Fiberglass painted with acrylic, wired  
upcycled plastic, acrylic  
19 × 60 × 38 cm
- 3  
*Half Hero Half Stone series*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
Variable dimension
- 4  
*Invasion*  
2009  
Embroidered painting, wire  
Variable dimension
- 5  
*The Views*  
2023  
Fiberglass painted with acrylic  
Variable dimension, 10 pieces
- 6  
*Humans are Getting Noisier and Universe is  
Getting Quieter #1-#6*  
2018  
Indian ink, ecoline on paper  
42 × 30 cm
- 7  
*Hope and Fear of Hoping*  
2023  
Fiberglass painted with acrylic spraypaint,  
cloth, wired upcycled plastic, acrylic  
205 × 90 × 60 cm
- 8  
*We Are Human*  
2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint  
430 × 270 × 270 cm
- 9  
*Ala Carte Modern Slavery*  
2023  
Fiberglass painted with acrylic, buffalo skin,  
fabric, dacron  
83 × 68 × 115 cm
- 10  
*We are The Fashion*  
2018  
Embroidered painting  
543 × 238 cm
- 11  
*Cave Full Of Revolution*  
2018  
Embroidered painting  
268 × 156 cm
- 12  
*Cut The Mountain And Let It Fly #2*  
2023  
Mural on wall  
600 × 1300 cm
- 13  
*Dark Opera series #3-5*  
2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 × 150 cm
- 14  
*And My Brain Believe in My Money  
I Try To Tell You, I was A God  
I Try To Lick My Own God*  
2013  
Embroidered painting, wire  
Diameter 117 cm
- 15  
*Everyone Building Hope*  
2022  
Fiberglass  
210 × 80 × 50 cm
- 16  
*Self-Foresting #4*  
2023  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 × 250 cm
- 17  
*Tak Ada Mati*  
2018  
Embroidered painting  
316 × 272 cm
- 18  
*Future Fungi*  
2023  
Fiberglass painted with acrylic, plywood,  
cloth  
210 × 72 × 40 cm
- 19  
*Reconstruction Dream*  
2023  
Fiberglass painted with acrylic, cloth,  
bolster, backpack, helmet, boots  
100 × 110 × 80 cm



*Social Layer*  
2022  
Embroidered painting  
278 × 162 cm

*Becoming Stone and Blooming*

2023

Fiberglass painted with acrylic, wired  
upcycled plastic, acrylic

19 × 60 × 38 cm









*Half Hero Half Stone (Democracy)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
145 × 73 × 43 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Culture)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
123 × 72 × 37 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Advancement)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
172 × 72 × 33 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Diversity)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
127 × 83 × 43 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Equality)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
123 × 71 × 32 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Godhood)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
136 × 70 × 62 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Humanity)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
193 × 70 × 38 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Justice)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
146 × 87 × 30 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Peace)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
133 × 39 × 34 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Prosperity)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
183 × 68 × 37 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Sovereignty)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
123 × 71 × 32 cm



*Half Hero Half Stone (Tolerance)*  
2022 - 2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint, cement, sand,  
gravel, iron, plywood  
184 × 72 × 53 cm





*The Views*  
2023  
Fiberglass painted with acrylic  
Variable dimension, 10 pieces



*Humans are Getting Noisier and Universe is Getting Quieter #1*  
2018  
Indian ink, ecoline on paper  
42 x 30 cm



*Humans are Getting Noisier and Universe is Getting Quieter #2*  
2018  
Indian ink, ecoline on paper  
42 x 30 cm



*Humans are Getting Noisier and Universe is Getting Quieter #3*  
2018  
Indian ink, ecoline on paper  
42 x 30 cm



*Humans are Getting Noisier and Universe is Getting Quieter #4*  
2018  
Indian ink, ecoline on paper  
42 x 30 cm



*Humans are Getting Noisier and Universe is Getting Quieter #5*  
2018  
Indian ink, ecoline on paper  
42 x 30 cm



*Humans are Getting Noisier and Universe is Getting Quieter #6*  
2018  
Indian ink, ecoline on paper  
42 x 30 cm



*Cave Full Of Revolution*  
2018  
Embroidered painting  
268 × 156 cm

*Ala Carte Modern Slavery*  
2023  
Fiberglass painted with acrylic, buffalo skin,  
fabric, dacron  
83 × 68 × 115 cm



*Dark Opera series #5*  
2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 × 150 cm



**NEW  
WORLD  
WITH  
ANCIENT  
MIND**

*We Are Human*  
2023  
Fiberglass, spray paint  
430 × 270 × 270 cm

*Hope and Fear of Hoping*

2023

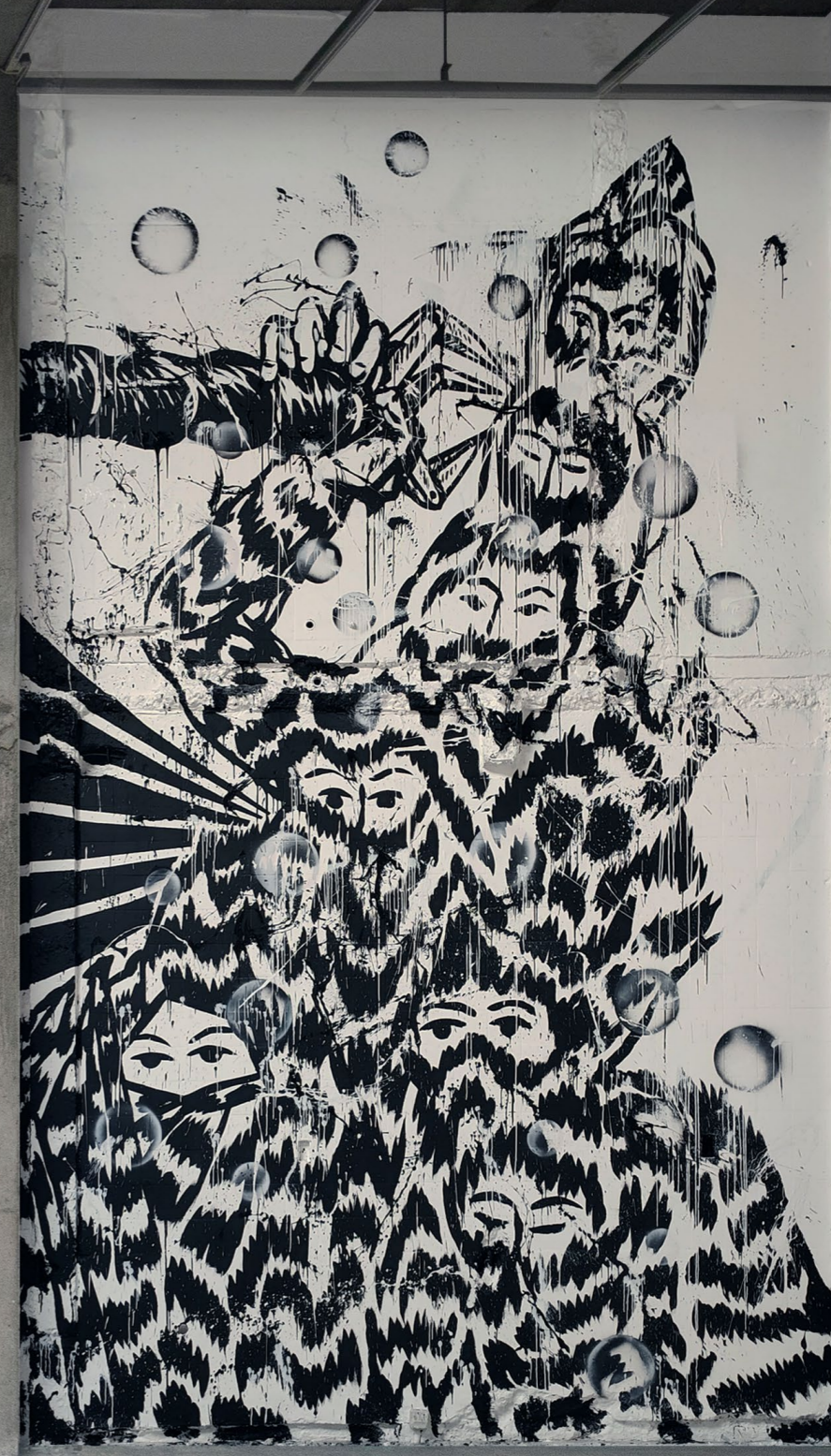
Fiberglass painted with acrylic spraypaint,  
cloth, wired upcycled plastic, acrylic  
205 × 90 × 60 cm







*We are The Fashion*  
2018  
Embroidered painting  
543 × 238 cm



*Cut The Mountain And Let It Fly #2*  
2023  
Mural on wall (rendering image)  
600 × 1300 cm

*Dark Opera series #5*  
2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 × 150 cm



*Dark Opera series #3*  
2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 × 150 cm

*Dark Opera series #4*  
2015  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 × 150 cm



*And My Brain Believe in My Money*  
2013  
Embroidered painting, wire  
Diameter 117 cm



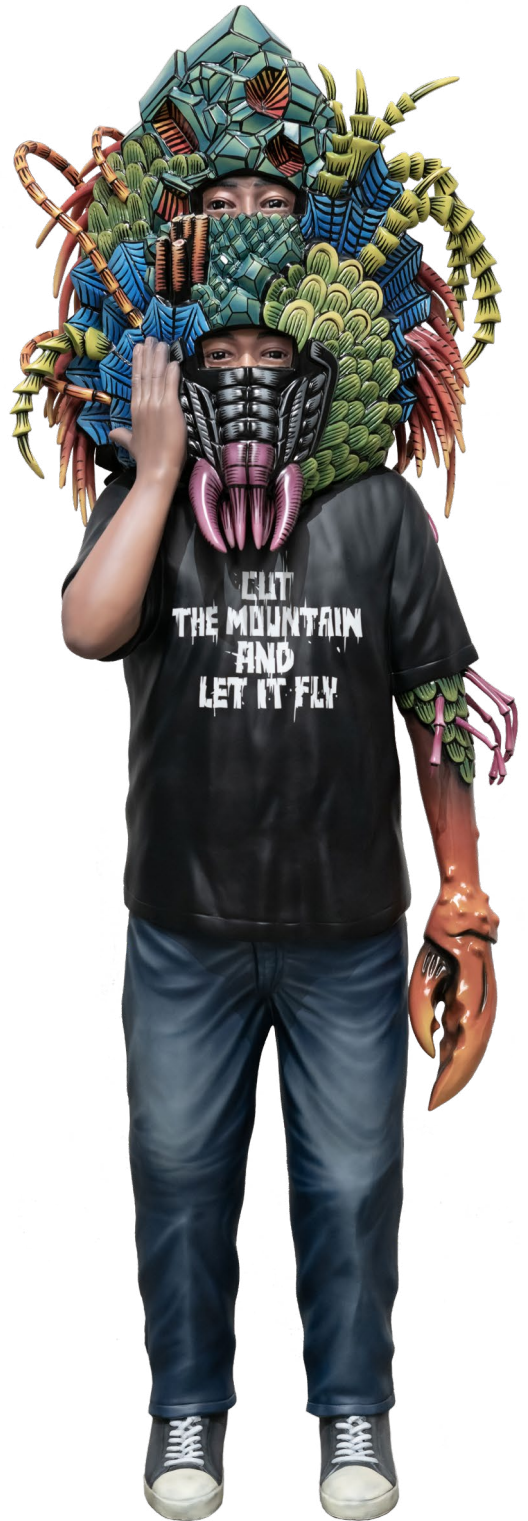
*I Try To Lick My Own God*  
2013  
Embroidered painting, wire  
Diameter 114 cm



*I Try To Tell You, I was A God*  
2013  
Embroidered painting, wire  
Diameter 117 cm



*Future Fungi*  
2023  
Fiberglass painted with acrylic, plywood,  
cloth  
210 × 72 × 40 cm



*Everyone Building Hope*  
2022  
Fiberglass  
210 × 80 × 50 cm



*Self-Foresting #4*  
2023  
Acrylic on canvas  
200 × 250 cm



*Reconstruction Dream*

2023

Fiberglass painted with acrylic, cloth,  
bolster, backpack, helmet, boots

100 × 110 × 80 cm



*Tak Ada Mati*  
2018  
Embroidered painting  
316 × 272 cm



EKO NUGROHO

Art Museum, Singapore; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia; Asia Society Museum, New York, USA; Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, Netherlands; Musée d'Art Moderne Paris, Paris, France; Musée des Beaux-arts de Lyon, Lyon, France; Deutsche Bank, Frankfurt, Germany; and Haus Der Kulturen Der Welt, Berlin, Germany.

B. 1977, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
Lives and works in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Eko Nugroho (b. 1977) is one of the most acclaimed members of the young generation of Indonesian contemporary artists. He is part of the generation that came to maturity during the period of upheaval and reform that occurred in the wake of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, the subsequent fall of the Soeharto regime and the transition to democracy in Indonesia. Grounded in both local traditions and global popular culture, Nugroho's works are deeply engaged with the culture of his time, imbued with his critical yet oftentimes playful socio-political commentary. In 2000, Nugroho founded *Daging Tumbuh*, a collaborative zine that invites participation from non-artists. In addition to drawings and painting, he works in a variety of other media, including murals, sculpture, animation, and tapestry.

Nugroho has held numerous solo exhibitions at major institutions and galleries around the world, including *Plastic Democracy*, Arndt Art Agency, Berlin, Germany (2018); *Semelah*, Asia Society (special commission), New York, USA (2017); *Landscape Anomaly*, Salihara Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia (2015); *We Are What We Mask*, Singapore Tyler Print Institute, Singapore (2013); *Témoignage Hybride*, Musée D'art Moderne de Paris, France (2012); and *This Republic Need More Semeleh*, Ark Galerie, Jakarta, Indonesia (2011). He has participated in prestigious international exhibitions, the most recent one being *Setouchi Triennale*, Ibuki Island, Japan (2019); *In Search of Southeast Asia Through M+ Collections*, M+ Museum, Hong Kong (2018); Art Basel Hong Kong: Encounters, Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, Hong Kong (2015); 10th Gwangju Biennale: *Burning Down the House*, Gwangju, South Korea (2014); *The Global Contemporary, Art Worlds After 1989*, ZKM | Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, Germany (2011); and the 10th Lyon Biennale: *The Spectacle of the Everyday*, Lyon, France (2009). Eko Nugroho was part of *Sakti: The Indonesian Pavilion*, 55th Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy (2013). His works are among the key collections of M+, Hong Kong; Singapore

THANK YOU

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KELUARGA BESAR WARUNGBOTO

TIM KERJA DI YAYASAN EKO  
NUGROHO YANG SELALU  
MEMFASILITASI IDE-IDE SAYA:  
STUDIO EKO NUGROHO  
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REGINA, FITA, ANANG, AMBAR,  
KAWARI)  
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(DITA, INTAN, JOE, ADIT, ONEP)  
EKO NUGROHO ART CLASS  
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HENDRA, ADI, ASRIEL, YOGI,  
GILANG, FAUZA, FATMALA, ELLA)  
DGTMB ART BORDIR  
(SOLEH, RINTO, AJIJ, ADE)  
DAGINGTUMBUH KOMIK  
WAYANG BOCOR  
DGTMB VERSUS PROJECT

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DEA APRILIA  
ADINDA YUWONO  
ANISA RIANTI  
ADITYA SENA HADIKUSUMO  
DEDI SUTOYO  
BISMA ALIFARDHAN NASTIA  
TUTI HARYATI  
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UMAMI ISSUES

KURA KURA BEER

CUT THE MOUNTAIN AND LET IT FLY

EKO NUGROHO