

**JULY 21, 2006 - SEPTEMBER 1, 2006**

opening reception July 21, 5 - 9 pm

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Chicago, IL: Mad Magazine meets Java in sculptural installations and paintings.

# HERI DONO

## *Civilization Oddness*



Heri Dono, one of the most famous Indonesian artists, will show his latest installations and paintings at Walsh Gallery. His works are inspired by the world of cartoons and the ancient tradition of Javanese shadow puppets. The opening reception is on July 21 from 5 to 9 pm. The show is entitled "Civilization Oddness" and is curated by Jim Supangkat. Both the curator and the artist will be present at the opening reception. This is Heri Dono's first solo gallery show in the United States.

Heri Dono's art, no matter what form it takes, reflects an internalization of the study of the illogical. One of his strengths is in creating complicit laughter to realize art as a vehicle of social critique. As the curator points out, "cartoon characters, although crushed to smithereens, never die." In the 80s, Heri Dono's art explored the world of cartoons, while the rest of the Indonesian art world was caught up in a social commentary of a more gory sort. After studying with an eccentric puppet maker in Java, Heri Dono began to reinvent "wayang", or "shadow puppets," which is the traditional Javanese form of puppet-making. Javanese leather puppetry is an ancient art form that is still practiced on the island of Java and dates back to the 1st century. The actual forms and symbols used in this practice are filled with mystical meanings and some forms are even seen as sacred.

The roots of this ancient art form are keenly felt in Heri Dono's contemporary fusion. He has merged the world of cartoons with puppets, creating a social engine that challenges viewers' understanding of the relationship between art and culture. This exhibit consists of many separate installations that all celebrate oddness as a conceptual platform from which to view the world. As Heri Dono says "observing odd realities with clear and true logic will certainly make all of those realities seem odd, unreal or untrue. But if reality is observed with an upside-down mind, all realities will seem logical and clear."

Some of this topsy-turviness is exemplified in the installation "Flying Angels." These angels are hanging puppets which are a fusion of wooden sculpture and electronic devices. They have circuit boards on their chests and are carved from wood with robotic accessories. These electronic features include wings that flap and a penis painted white that rises and falls. Heri's paintings are again reminiscent of the cartoon world he loves fused with the wooden creatures he creates. In the painting "Modernisation Comes to the Village", a quasi-demon creature sits in a refrigerator that has pink legs sticking out of the drawer beneath it. Meanwhile, a distant helicopter unloads mini figures that parachute gleefully into an inviting and open toilet.

These are just a few examples from the current show. Heri Dono used local Indonesian radio repairmen to help him make these installations. He respects these craftsmen as artists who create innovative solutions on a daily basis and wanted to incorporate their energy into his art. When talking about his own incorporation of discarded objects into his creations, Heri Dono said "previously, these artisans made toys and other usable objects from coconut shells, wood, and leaves, etc...The things they make may not be perfect, but then, innovation has never resulted in perfection. Perfection is a continuation of a discovery in which innovation plays no part."

Mr. Dono's work has been exhibited around the world in various exhibitions including the 1st Asia Pacific Triennial, the 23rd Sao Paulo Biennale, the 1st Kwangju Biennale, the 2001 Yokohama Triennale, the 2003 Venice Biennale, the 2000 Shanghai Biennale, and at museums including the Asia Society, New York, and the House of World Cultures, Berlin.