

# Art Radar

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## Desires, Destruction, Urban Dreams: Indonesian artists Maryanto and Wiyoga Muhardanto

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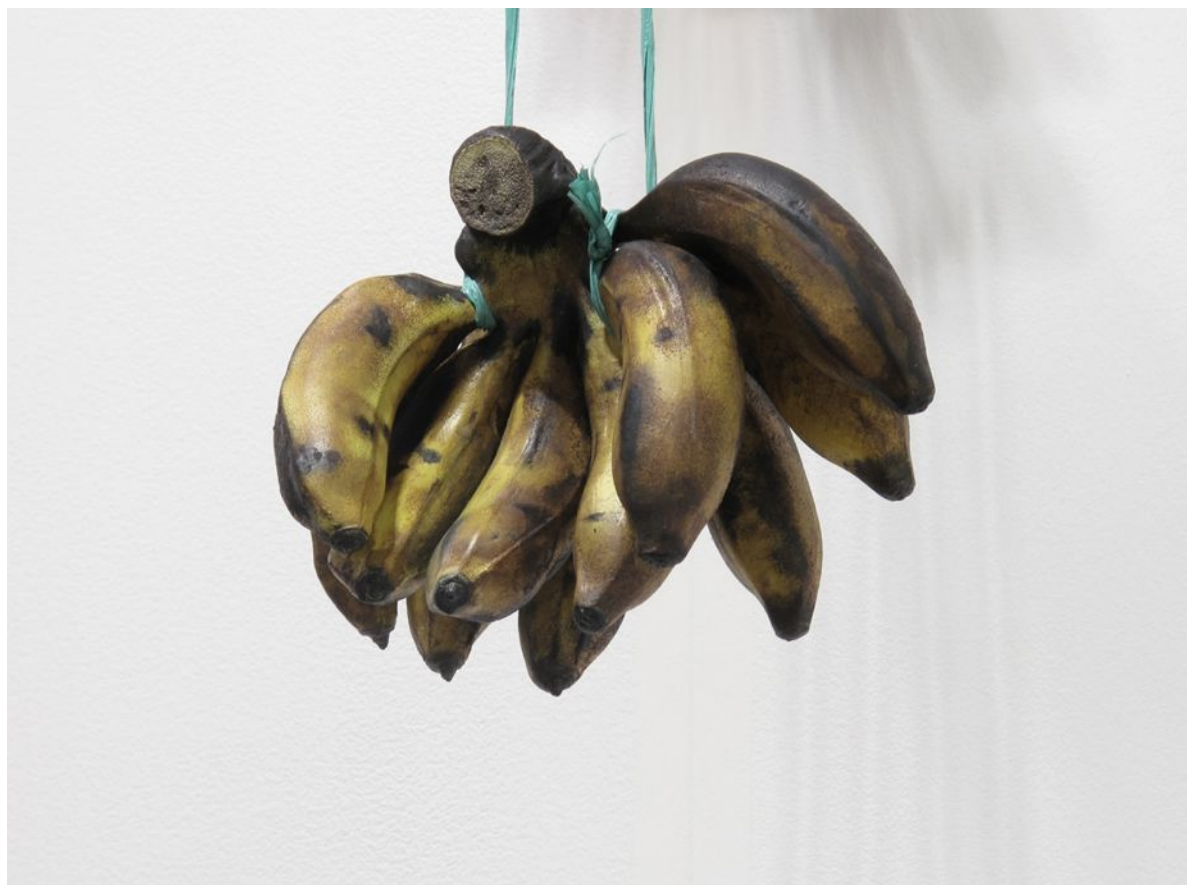


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**Indonesia's art scene has grown in recent years, with a diversity of artists who not only appeal to international collectors but also add unique perspectives to cultural discourse.**

*Art Radar* features two artists that address the meaning of contemporary existence amidst urban change, Wiyoga Muhardanto and Maryanto, focusing on their work presented at Art Basel Hong Kong in March 2016.



Wiyoga Muhardanto, "What if?" (detail), 2016, Discoveries at Art Basel Hong Kong 2016, ROH Projects. Image courtesy ROH Projects.

Indonesian artists Maryanto and Wiyoga Muhardanto both capture the impact of contemporary urban life on our cultural, social and spiritual being, addressing consumerism, the place of time in rapidly-changing societies and the environment with work that is aesthetically distinct and layered. They reflect the experience of cities, as modernity reshapes landscapes, transforms desires and redefines meaning.

### Consumer culture

Born in 1984 in Jakarta, **Wiyoga Muhardanto** has been prolific since he graduated with a BFA from the sculpture studio of the Institute of Technology Bandung's art school (2002-2007). He has seen a stellar rise, attending international art events such as the **Jakarta Biennale** in 2009 and 2014 (respectively curated by Agung Hujatnikajennong and by Charles Esche), and also participated in the Yogyakarta Biennale in 2009.



Wiyoga Muhardanto, "What if?", 2016, Discoveries at Art Basel Hong Kong 2016, ROH Projects. Image courtesy ROH Projects.

His presentation in the Discoveries section at **Art Basel Hong Kong 2016** entitled "What if?" was a showcase of resin sculptures that explored the relationship between people and objects as signifiers of city life, reflecting on the things they desire. It almost posed the question, "What if the object desired us?", ironically mirroring the lives of collectors and art enthusiasts who seek out the aura within. Wiyoga told *Art Radar*:

*Cities play an important part in our desires. The city of freedom, the city of development, the city of excess, the city of luminous spectacles, and etcetera...Cities and their complexity, cacophony and chaos – cities' meandering streets never seem to lead to logical destinations.*



Wiyoga Muhandanto, 'What if? (Figure no. 4, Frozen)', 2016. Image courtesy ROH Projects.

In the main piece there is a couple, sculpted in resin, with their heads resting against each other. At the bottom, is a tiny figure of Elsa from the Disney film *Frozen*, at first elusive because she is upside down, as her dress funnels up to cup their heads, resting against each other – almost like objects randomly placed alongside each other, and only for a time. Like the Elsa toy, people's time together passes like a Disney dream.

Another insight into the consumer and the object is *Wheel*, which shows a wheel from a public transportation minivan (locally called 'angkot') depicting at once movement and stillness, thus making traffic jams into a metaphor for a lack of social mobility.



Wiyoga Muhardanto, 'What if? (Figure no. 2, Wheel)', 2016. Image courtesy ROH Projects.

Roy Voragen, curator for Wiyoga at **ROH Projects** says about the artist:

*Wiyoga addresses the contradictions of urban living, which are visibly apparent in Indonesia's megacities such as Jakarta, where Wiyoga was born, and Bandung, where he is based. And we were confident people who are not familiar with Indonesia or Wiyoga's work could still relate to the issue of urban contradictions.*



Maryanto, "Mineral Desire", 2016, Discoveries at Art Basel Hong Kong 2016, Yeo Workshop.  
Image courtesy Yeo Workshop.

### **Material existence**

**Maryanto** (b. 1977) has been well received internationally. His exhibition "Mineral Desire", which was presented in the Discoveries section at Art Basel Hong Kong 2016, epitomised his concerns about the impact on the natural environment. In some ways it presents the way we interface with our natural environment, mainly through products shaped out of the materials we consume in our landscape.

Ostensibly, the work seems like an extended landscape painting combined with an installation, in which the viewer is drawn into a photorealistic image, in acrylics, of a natural scene that has been mined for resources. With several cabinets and tables of objects and sculptures on the walls and floors, the viewer might see the connection between the materials that shape a comfortable life and the resources it destroys to make possible. The work has a theatrical narrative that leads ultimately to an infernal landscape of mined destruction, almost post-apocalyptic, at once "arresting and shocking, and at the same time romantic and tragic", as Yeo Workshop describes it.





Maryanto, "Mineral Desire", 2016, Discoveries at Art Basel Hong Kong 2016, Yeo Workshop.  
Detail of cupboard with tools sculptures. Image courtesy the artist and Yeo Workshop.

It stretches out towards stone, resources and minerals layered together. But in the foreground, laid out almost as a domestic scene is drilling equipment and flagpoles of protesters. As described by Yeo Workshops,

*The booth houses cabinets of curiosities with mysterious objects: mined stones and strange forms like coveted minerals excavated and archived by explorers.*



Maryanto, "Mineral Desire", 2016, Discoveries at Art Basel Hong Kong 2016, Yeo Workshop.  
Detail of cupboard with tools sculptures. Image courtesy Yeo Workshop.

Audrey Yeo of Singapore's Yeo Workshop told *Art Radar*:

*I think his work resonates to people at a political level and echoes a lot of the universal concerns on sustainability and exploration of resources. On top of that, the artist is very sincere and the work is very well made. The work was very well received with collectors at ABHK. Some of his existing collectors were pleased to see the work had progressed since previous showings and new collectors were able to encounter his work which is easy to access in its visual aesthetic, narrative within the installation. There is also an increase in interest in Indonesian artists internationally.*



Maryanto, 'Mineral Desire', 2016, acrylic on canvas, 200 x 200 cm (diptych). Image courtesy the artist and Yeo Workshop.

### **Beyond the landscape**

Maryanto's work is largely based on his printmaking training. He participated at the **Yogyakarta Biennale 2015** with its theme "Hacking Conflict, Indonesia meets Nigeria", creating a large entrance piece. In the same year, he took part in the Jakarta Biennale "Neither Forward Nor Back" as curated by Charles Esche, with an installation work entitled *Temah Buah di Wonocolo*. His projects include the Setouchi Triennale 2016, and an upcoming solo exhibition at Yeo Workshop at the Gillman Barracks in November 2016.





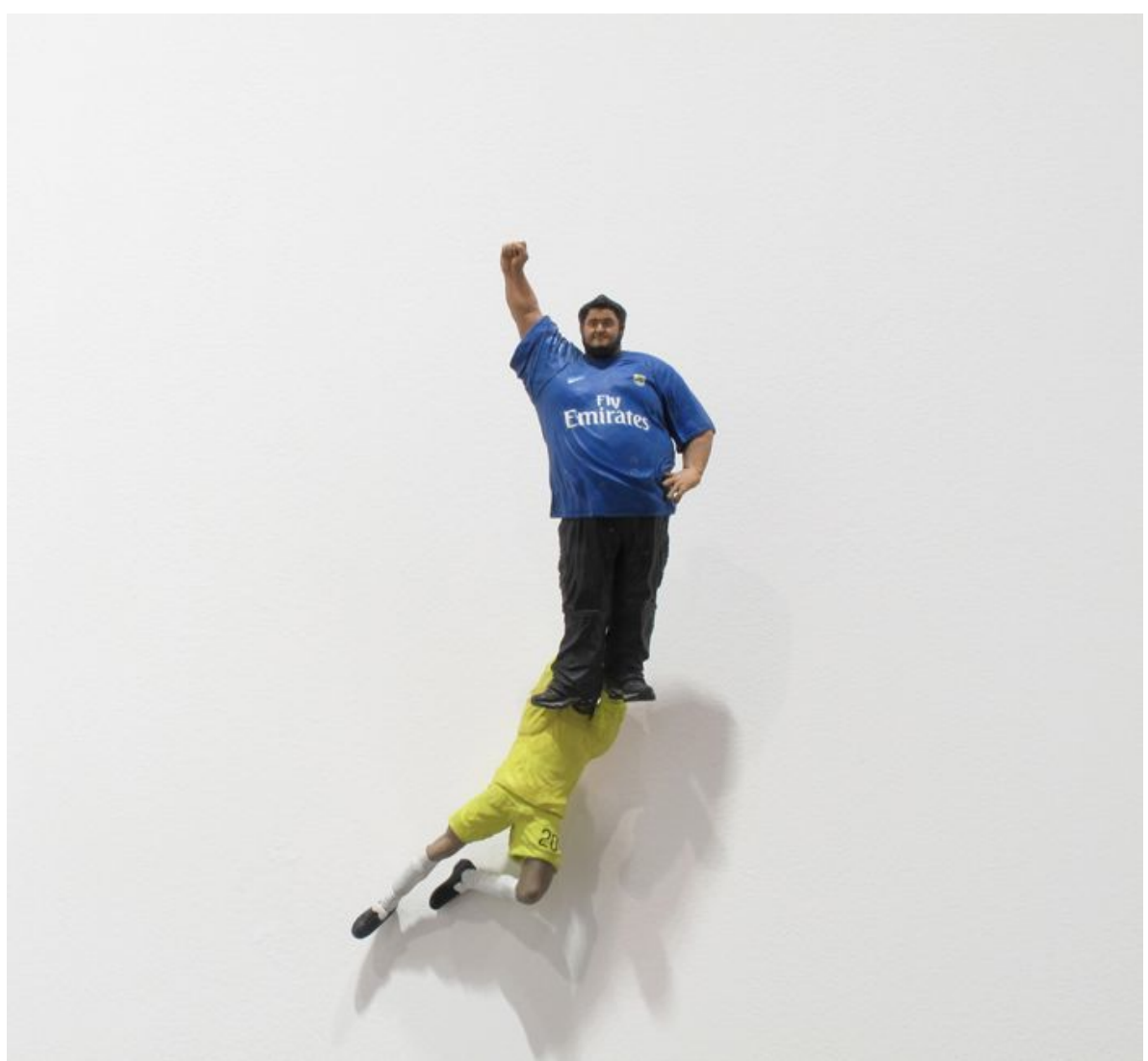
Maryanto, "Mineral Desire", 2016, Discoveries at Art Basel Hong Kong 2016, Yeo Workshop.

Image courtesy the artist and Yeo Workshop.

Maryanto is greatly concerned with the visibly external effects of urban change, depicting environmental degradation as the price of our paradise – the inferno of environmental destruction, hidden away in mined fields in the deep countryside, that makes our domestic paradise. His work for ABHK is inspired by his experiences of

seeing nature destroyed worldwide. Maryanto told *Art Radar*:

*A landscape is a space with a narrative. It has a place and subject. Its story of transformation, is about politics, capitalism and economics. I got these stories from Indonesia, from my childhood, from friends, communities, books, NGOs, and news. When I went to Nigeria last year and Brazil in 2012, I saw several things, the same problems, the conflict, politics as we see in Indonesia: overpopulation, resources, oil, mining, urban slums.*



Wiyoga Muhandanto, 'What if? (Figure no. 3, Football Fans)', 2016. Image courtesy ROH Projects.

Both Maryanto and Wiyoga mirror uncertainties, as Indonesia reflects on a tumultuous period in its history. But its current period of development brings with it a set of concerns that are unsettling in the way they chip away at the soul, nature and existence. The Indonesian experience universally resonates, and both artists tell an important story. ROH Projects curator conclude:

*It is sometimes claimed that the post-Suharto generation is apolitical. However, while Wiyoga Muhandanto and Maryanto are different artists with different backgrounds – the former is trained in sculpture in Bandung and the latter is trained in printmaking in Yogyakarta – both deal with political issues. Wiyoga's work deals with the micro-politics*

*of everyday contemporary urban life in subtle, witty ways by juxtaposing different visual elements. Maryanto's work, on the other hand, deals with the detrimental effects – while perhaps unintended and unwanted – of man-made processes (urbanization, industrialization) on nature.*

**Remo Notarianni**

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