

Entang Wiharso's Hybrid Brain at Mizuma Gallery Singapore

by tsrasia | Oct 7, 2018 | invisibleflaneuse | 0 comments

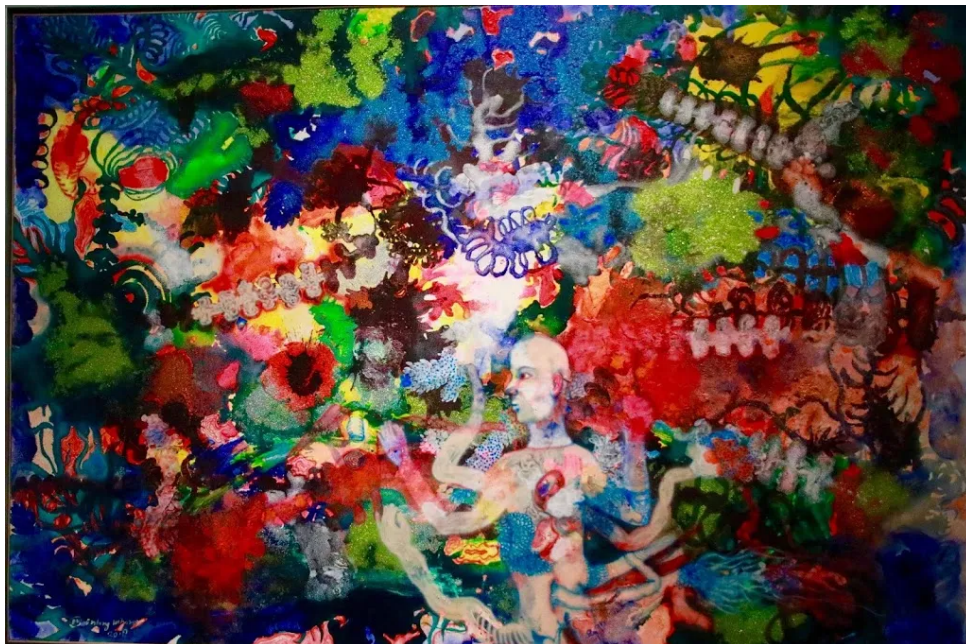
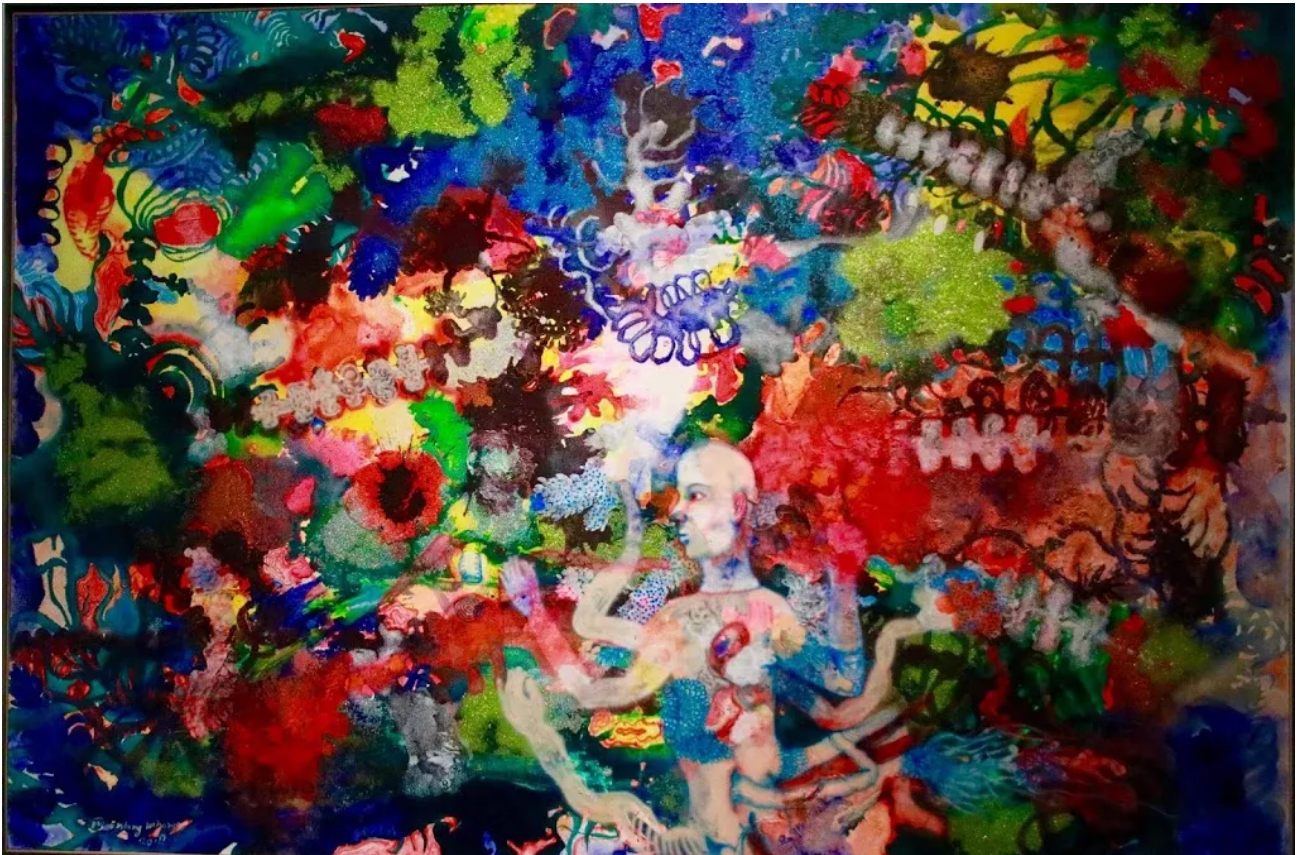


Image 1. Entang Wiharso, *Reconstruction – Floating Garden*, 2018. Ink, acrylic, glitter, car paint on canvas. 145 x 214 cm.

Entang Wiharso (born 1967 in Tegal, Central Java, Indonesia) calls himself a diaspora artist, and he regularly shuttles back and forth from Yogyakarta, Indonesia to Rhode Island, New York where he also has a studio. Married to an American woman, his work often makes references to political, religious, ethnic and social systems and their power over the lives of individuals. His current solo at [Mizuma Gallery](#), *Hybrid Brain*, remains true to form as a show of a mixture of wall sculptures and abstract paintings, a riotous celebration of colour, pop culture references, surreal tableaux, and a steady deployment of Indonesian wayang figures or cyborgian forms as a tumble of bodies, or sometimes in what feels like a danse macabre embrace, and always manifesting the presence of the cyclopedian eye. These eyes may present as sets of multiples, but they, more often than not, do not pair up, invoking the binary of seeing/unseeing.

Invocation of binaries though is very much part of Wiharso's artistic lingua franca. Hence, the binaries of belonging/unbelonging, public/private, male/female, nature/culture, inclusion/exclusion also manifest in the artworks of *Hybrid Brain*. Certain symbols appear again and again in his work, from his *Trilogy* series to *Untold Stories* to *Promising Land*: the ubiquitous gun as synecdoche for violence and figures that are often subhuman (the devil or other mythological figures connoting malevolent intent) or superhuman (e.g. Batman). Also present are the self-referential figures of entwined man and woman, his and her snaking braids oftentimes resembling chains as a symbol of bondage or lack of freedom.

The abstract paintings in *Hybrid Brain*, rendered in thick impasto and vivid palette, also utilise glitter, resin, ink, acrylic and car paint (see Image 1) and remind one of paradise gardens. A couple of them contains the ubiquitous eye, and their titles oscillate between a kind of utopian innocence such as *Floating Garden* or *Hibernation* to one of premonition and wariness, such as *Protection* and *Ground Zero* (see Image 2). Ground zero is a symbolic reference to the mass destruction of people around the world, not just confined to New York.



Image 2. Entang Wiharso, *Reconciliation – Ground Zero*, 2018. Acrylic, ink, thread, resin, colour pigment, and glitter on canvas. 200 x 287 cm.

His aluminium sculptures, in contrast to those he showed at *Promising Land*, downplay the

colour palette (we get porcelain blue or plain aluminium cast) but continue his investigation into the concept of the transplant, the idea of home and belonging, in this case under the shadow of recent American political events (see *Under the Shadow of the Flag*, Image 3), where violence is being normalised. Amidst the familiar self-referential figures of man and woman locked in their morally ambivalent embrace, with her holding a kris, and an assortment of mythological and heroic figures (Batman, for ex.) and gargoyle heads, Entang has positioned an oval frame, within which is a photograph of his home in Rhode Island, looking in this instance rather like a daguerreotype, connoting nostalgia and personal history (it's the warmest part of the sculpture). On either side of this sculpture is a flag, on which Entang has inscribed slogans and other exhortations for human dignity and against racism in Bahasa, and can feel too on-the-nose, almost preachy. The first flag, for example, reads "All humans are born equal and this must be absolutely respected" and "Every person has the right to live with dreams, opinions, and to continue (and sustain) their life on earth". The other flag reads, "Racism is a crime. Committing racist actions is a great sin and is unethical" and "Discrimination is a crime. Discrimination is an action against humanity". (translation courtesy of Mizuma Gallery)



Image 3. Entang Wiharso, *Under the Shadow of the Flag*, 2018. Aluminium, mirror, digital print on acrylic glass, resin, colour pigment, thread, and fabric. 223 x 282 x 25 cm. Ed. of 2 + 1 AP

The blue in *Under the Shadow of the Flag* echoes the particular shade of blue in *Recalling Home* (2018) (see image 4) – a reference to the blue of Chinese ceramics and harkening back to Art History: Blue Moon. Foliage here also tracks his series of sculptures in *Untold Stories*, the intricate detailing mesmerising the eye.



Image 4. Entang Wiharso, *Recaling Home*, 2018. Aluminum, resin, thread, colour pigment, and car paint. 244.5 x 339 x 15 cm. ed. of 2 + 1 AP

The work I was most drawn to and found most inspiring, surprisingly, was the tetrptych *Art History: Indonesia Diaspora*, 2015 (see Image 5). Abstract and minimalist, its title is evocative and each canvas is entirely filled with a dense network of infinitesimal ballpoint strokes in a colour picked by each member in Entang's family, giving the canvas a thread-like texture. The process feels meditative and protracted and spells of infinite patience. The horizontal line across the middle of each canvas is meant to represent the umbilical cord. The last canvas displays two larger circles with two overlapping smaller circles, mirroring a Venn diagram, connected but separate, encapsulating the nature of not just Entang's family relationship, but more universally, ours too.

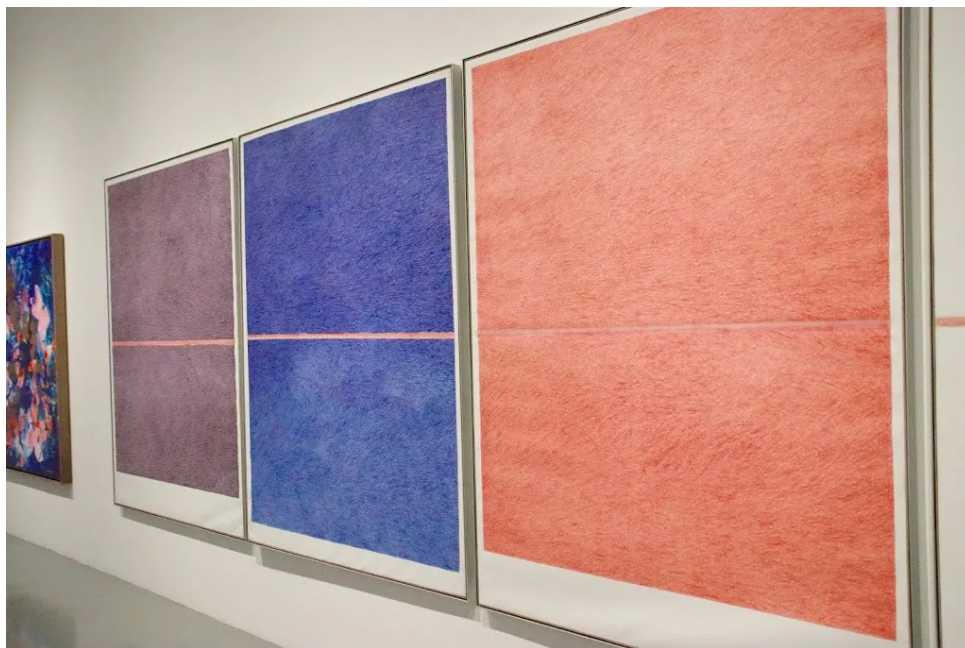


Image 5. Entang Wiharso, *Art History – Indonesia Diaspora*, 2015. Ballpoint and car paint on linen. 200 x 600 cm (tetrptych, each panel 200 x 150 cm).

The exhibition also includes an interactive work where each attendee is invited to affix his or her thumbprint to Entang's simple canvas of a blue moon hovering over a territorial landscape. I had fun making my mark!

Catch this incredible exhibition before it ends, it's a feast for the eyes.

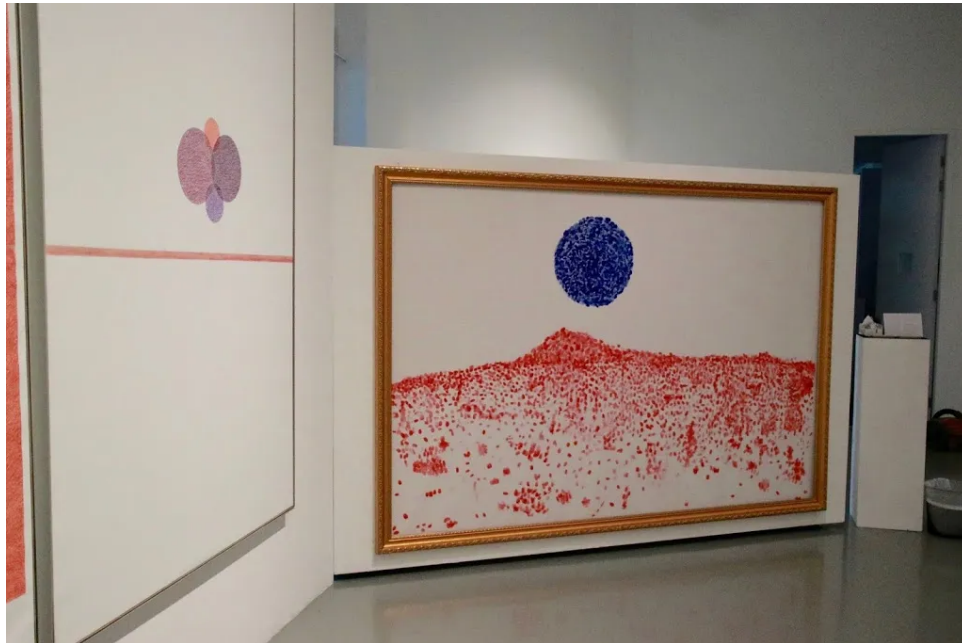


Image 6. Entang Wiharso, *Hibernation — Ground Zero*, 2018. Interactive performance with one-month duration. 264 x 182 cm.