

# The Standing Man

A Statement and An Invitation

Solo Exhibition by S Dwi Styra Acong



## AGAINST THE UTOPIAN SOCIETY OF THE LAST MAN

"We have invented happiness" -says the last men, and they blink.  
(Thus Spake Zarathustra)

Friedrich Nietzsche (1884-1900)

There is a certain Nietzschean spirit embodied and celebrated in the works of contemporary Indonesian painter S.Dwi Styra Acong. His signature lone figure, blue skin and clad only in black pants standing in a fixed pose, immovable, impervious to the surrounding natural splendor and horror, unnatural squalor or on flimsy man-made structures and constructions, is a powerful and foolhardy display of individual willfulness against subjugation of the mind, body and the instincts. The 37 year old painter from Malang, East Java Indonesia, who received formal art training from the Indonesia Institute of the Art, Yogyakarta, have been most persistent in highlighting the will of the individual, his relation to himself, society and the natural world. It must be stated that to this writer, Acong, as he is popularly known and a regular participant in exhibitions in Indonesia, Malaysia, China and Taiwan, does not paint pleasant pictures to serve as delightful conversation pieces for polite society. His paintings demand more than mere platitudes about aesthetics or good taste. In fact, it is not so much about what is being said about society and our way of life than what is being hinted or implied that is the



more arresting aspect of Acong's works. His subject matter evoke feelings that are indescribable, with the simultaneous presence of awe and dread as well as familiarity and estrangement.

Acong's works are timely, what with the growing conservatism and the accompanying threat of extremism that is taking place around the world. What both 'isms' have in common with other ideologies and value systems in the past and present are their lofty aims to establish a society by hook or crook based on Utopian or Golden Age ideals that exists only in fairy tales and myths (both ancient and modern). In these 'perfect' societies, there is peace, prosperity, efficiency and the welfare of the less fortunate are taken care of. There are great progress made in the sciences and the arts, and the people are healthy and happy. Each inhabitant is 'ennobled' by the values that ensures their obedience to the system that claims to serve their best interests in this life (and the next even!). Everything is perfect, or almost perfect. The only problem is, for such a society to exist and to function accordingly to those ideals, it can only be achieved at the expense of one's individuality and humanity. Think, is it any wonder that, in the process of trying to establish an ideal society based on a system or ideology, conformity, uniformity and blind loyalty must first be inculcated, either by coercion or

punishment. Those who do not subscribe or are in the opposition are the first to be targeted for condemnation, conversion or extermination. Any differences that contradicts, casts doubts or challenges the claims of doctrinal truth and supremacy are not tolerated and must be banished. Without these obstacles, the smoother and wider implementation of those systems or ideologies can now be possible and total.

In the end, what we will have is a totalitarian society made up of what Nietzsche called 'last man'. The 'last man' embodies the following qualities, namely conformity, normality and security. Since they are living in the most ideal or perfect society, following the most ideal and perfect system, they are perfectly contented (or should be). Hence there is no more need to strive and struggle (and the lessons that one may profit from it). They live happily ever after.... forever.

The perfect "feel good" ending to an ideal life, love story or children's fairy tales. However, life does not mirror children's tales and other simplistic infantile fantasies no matter how subtle it is promoted (sugarcoated and all) or vigorously shoved down our throats like bitter medicine which is supposedly for our own good. Acong's lone figure is the antithesis to these 'Last Men' whose numbers are growing in our society. They have without hesitation surrendered their rights and responsibilities to these puppet masters who peddles Utopia and expects us to do the same so as to ensure the promise of a perfect ending to their infantile fantasies is fulfilled.

To be free from the tyranny of contempt, fear and loathing design to force us to adhere meekly to a prescribed way of behaving and living acceptable to all the enslavers of mind and body, Acong's man, his bare back turned against us, strives to leave behind these shackles, bell-collared leashes and nose rings that already many among us so proudly shake and jiggle to announce our complicity, akin to puppets on strings. We may heave a sigh, complain and whine when being pulled, pushed and jerked around by our master(s), mentor(s) and minder(s), but the alternative, which is complete freedom and total autonomy is unthinkable and unbearable, like aforementioned puppets losing their strings. However, to keep us dependent, the puppet masters and Utopian peddlers lulls us with their muzak and siren calls, or provoke us with their skull drudgery verbiage and venom. Ultimately, what all Utopians seek are numbers to subscribe, justify and impose their illusions of perfection. But history has since time immemorial shown us the ironic finale of all totalitarian value systems, which has the highest numbers of people being led like cattle to the slaughterhouse or off the cliff.

Acong's standing blue man is a natural part of his surrounding yet he is also distinctive. He is a natural and primary color by itself. He is human, yet strives to surpass the inhumanity that is his legacy. He is like Nietzsche's *Übermensch*. He is not a primitivist who trumpets the superior values of 'savages' or the supernatural. He boldly faces nature, not in defiance of her terrible and destructive powers but to strive against his limitations. He encounters nature not in resignation at the futility of domesticating her but as a way of undomesticating himself. What is needed are not justifications or intellectualizations, but acceptance and acting upon one's calling, to be out and about in the 'real' world, not the world of mediated signs and symbols, comforted by customs and regulated by dogmas or never ending games of chess, snakes and ladders and monopoly. Only by a self initiated process of critical reflection and transcending values and systems can we arrive at our most base but also most ennobling self.

"Become who you are!"  
Friedrich Nietzsche (1884-1900)

**Tan Sei Hon**

Art Writer

1/11/14



**Inspiration Room 1** | 120 x 100cm  
Oil on canvas | 2014



**Inspiration Room 3** | 120 x 100cm  
Oil on canvas | 2014



**Golden Ways** | 180 x 180cm  
Oil on canvas | 2014



**Walking on The Sea** | 150 x 100cm  
Oil on canvas | 2014



**Bahasa Laut 2** | 120 x 200cm  
Oil on canvas | 2014



**Bahasa Laut 3** | 120 x 200cm  
Oil on canvas | 2014



## S Dwi Styta Acong

Born in 1977 in Malang, Indonesia  
Currently lives in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

### SOLO EXHIBITION

**2014** "THE STANDING MAN" G13 Gallery, KL, Malaysia.

**2008** " SEEDS OF LIGHT " Musium Afandi Yogyakarta Indonesia

**2006** " WAKTU GONG " KOONG Galeri Jakarta Indonesia

**2002** "INTERLUDE" Pendapa Budaya ASDRAFI Yogyakarta Indonesia

### GROUP EXHIBITION

#### 2014

LEGACY OF PWER ARTJOG !4 Taman Budaya Yogyakarta

TAFSIR MAESTRO SENI RUPA INDONESIA "AHMAD SADALI" Gallery Nasional Indonesia

ART EXSPO MALAYSIA 2014 Gallery G13 Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

SOSIO LANDSCAPE National Museum Of Cambodia

UOB Painting On The Year 2014 Jakarta

#### 2013

MARITIM ARTJOG 13 Taman Budaya Yogyakarta

ART EXSPO MALAYSIA 2013 Gallery G13 Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

IDIALEK IAA 2013 Gallery Nasional Jakarta

UOB Painting on the year Jakarta

RECENT WORKS Gallery G 13 Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

UNDER The SUN ASIAN CONTEMPHORARY ART GWANGJU Korea

ENCHANTED SHADOW Massachusetts Avenue, N.W Washington D.C USA

#### 2012

ANIVERSARY #2 Jakarta Art Distric Koong gallery

KEMBAR MAYANG Musium Widayat Magelang

ESTETICA SENSATION Koi Gallery Jakarta Indonesia

FRE KICK Royal Residen Ballroom Surabaya

SPIRIT OF JAVA Taksu gallery Bali

MALAYSIA ART EXSPO 2013 Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

LOOKING EAST (A Gaze Upon Indonesian Contemporary Art )

ARTJOG 12 Taman Budaya Yogyakarta.

JAKARTA ART AWARD INTERNATIONAL PAINTING COMPETITION

Nort Art Space Pasar Seni Ancol Jakarta Indonesia

#### 2011

INTIP Jakarta Art Distrik KOONG gallery Jakarta Indonesia

ARTJOG 11 Taman Budaya Yogyakarta. Indonesia

BAZAAR ART JAKARTA 2011 Ritz calton pacific Place Jakarta . Indonesia

BAYANG INDONESIAN ISLAMIC ART Galeri Nasional Indonesia Indonesia

MANDIRI BANK Opening Gedung Esa Sampurna Surabaya Indonesia

PASAR ILANG KUMANDANGE Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta Indonesia

MALAYSIA ART EXSPO 2011 KOONG gallery Kuala Lumpur Malaysia

BIENNALE JATIM Go Art Space Gallery Surabaya Indonesia

RELIGIOUSITY opening Museum and Gallery MONDECOR

#### 2010

BAZAAR ART JAKARTA 2010 Ritz calton pacific Place Jakarta .

INDONESIAN ART NOW THE STRATEGIES OF BEING ARTJOG 10 Taman Budaya Yogyakarta. Indonesia

ANIVERSARY KOONG Gallery Jakarta. Indonesia

SIGN and AFTER CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC ART, Lawang Wangi Art&ScienceEstate Bandung. Indonesia

MALAYSIA ART EXSPO 2010 KOONG gallery Kuala Lumpur Malaysia.

#### 2009

RED DISTRICT PROJEC koong gallery Jakarta. Indonesia

TRANSCENT gallery kupu kupu jakarta, Indonesia

SURVEY II Edwin gallery Jakarta. Indonesia

SEMARAK bienale D Gallery Jakarta, Indonesia

CIGE 2009 KOONG Gallery Beijing Cina.

GRIP Vanessa Art Link Beijing Cina,

JOGJA ART FAIR # 2 Taman Budaya Yogyakarta. Indonesia

BAZAAR ART JAKARTA 2009 D Gallery Ritz calton pacific Place Jakarta. Indonesia

IVAA Online Archive Launching & Multimedia Galeri Nasional Indonesia.

ART TAIPEI 2009 KOONG Gallery Taipei Taiwan

#### 2008

"ABSOLUTE JAWA 50 %" Galeri rumah jawa Jakarta. "Indonesia

BENIH CAHAYA " Musium Afandi Yogyakarta "Indonesia

MANIFESTO " Galeri nasional Jakarta. Indonesia

JOGJA DEATHMATH Roommate Yogyakarta Indonesia

"YA-SIN THE UNSTRANSLATABLE djogja gallery. Indonesia

More info at [www.g13gallery.com.my](http://www.g13gallery.com.my)

### AWARD

#### 2014

BRONZE AWARD ESTABLISHED ARTIST UOB Painting on the year 2014

#### 2013

40 Besar Nominasi INDONESIA ART AWARD 2013

Nominasi UOB Painting on the year 2013

Artist Residensi Gwangju 2013

#### 2012

BEST PAINTING JAKARTA ART AWARD INTERNATIONAL PAINTING Art COMPETITION

#### 2000

INDONESIAN ART AWARDS Finalist VII. YSRI-Philip Morris

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