

AGUS BAQUL PURNOMO **UniVerse(s)**

vwfa



Agus Baqul Purnomo: UniVerse(s)

12 - 27 May 2011 at The Annexe Gallery
Central Market Annexe, Jalan Hang Kasturi,
50470 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

presented by

Valentine Willie Fine Art Kuala Lumpur

UniVerse(s) at Valentine Willie Fine Art Kuala Lumpur (VWFA KL), is a continuation of Agus Baqul Purnomo's exploration of Islamic Calligraphy, an ongoing preoccupation for the artist, amongst other works that deal with abstract styles and compositions. Since 2007 the artist has been highly focused on calligraphy as a means of expression, manifested in the work *Yassin (To be Continued)* included in the exhibition *Ya-Sin*, Jogja Gallery, 2008. The next year, he elaborated this into a full series of calligraphic works in his solo at VWFA KL, entitled *Recitel/Iqral*, a timely exhibition taking place during the month of Ramadhan.

Prior to this, Agus had a solo called *Vortex* that took nature as its main premise. *UniVerse(s)* therefore, is a combination of both *Recitel/Iqral* and *Vortex*: a continuation and expansion on the theme of nature and calligraphy as a style and concept. Initially, it was driven by his experience of negotiating the eruption of Mount Merapi near Yogyakarta, the city where he lives, that took place in October 2010. The greatest eruption in decades, the disaster shocked the country and the world, resulting in thousands of victims and making refugees of those forced to evacuate from their homes. This natural disaster was a tragic reminder of the 2006 earthquake that destroyed many lives and livelihoods in Yogyakarta.

Apart from natural disasters, there have been many debates going on in Indonesia lately – such as issues of Islam and pluralism. Somehow, these problems are interrelated with the recent political tensions in the country. Agus's dual role as a member of society, as well as an artist, forces him therefore, to contemplate on the forces of nature, spirituality and the conflicting man-made forces around his life; how Man tries to be the center of existence, whilst concurrently being a small presence within the infinite, invincible universe.

Similar with *Recitel/Iqral*, *UniVerse(s)* also uses verses from the Qur'an. In *Recitel/Iqral*, Agus quoted the most common Surahs that are often used as prayers in the everyday lives of Indonesian Muslim people. In *UniVerse(s)* he takes less popular Surahs, quoting parts of verses that have relations or associations with nature. Most of the Surahs themselves serve as contemplations and warnings about the power of God and the forces of nature that are beyond the control of man. Agus recomposes the calligraphic texts of these quotations and rearticulates them in his signature overlapping texts and color compositions that speak of their hidden subtexts.

The quoted verses are from the following Surahs: *Al-Buruuj (The Constellations)*, *Al-Lail (The Night)*, *Al-Zalzalah (The Earthquake)*, *An-Naba (The Announcement)*, *An-Nahl (The Bees)*, *An-Najm (The Star)*, *Ar-Rahman (The Most Gracious)*, *Asy-Syamsi (The Sun)*, and *Az-Zariyat (The Winds That Scatter)*. Most of the verse titles are depictions of the divine forces of nature. In *Recitel/Iqral*, Agus reproduced verses in their entirety, however in *UniVerse(s)*, he only uses quotations from Surahs that contain the words of these forces, which also serve as the works' titles. As a result, sentences function more as aphorisms or phrases that lead into different interpretations without reducing their power or original contexts when seen as a whole series.

One of the most striking works is the interpretation of Surah *Al-Zalzalah* Verse 1: "When the earth is shaken to her (utmost) convulsion". Meaning earthquake, Agus depicts *Al-Zalzalah* with distorted,

overlapped scriptures in red, terracotta, black and fiery colors, suggesting the colors of magma. Although related to the Mount Merapi eruption and the recent earthquakes occurring in Japan, the Qur'an advises that these apocalyptic signs must be philosophically acknowledged as one of nature's destructive acts and a necessary part of the cycle of life and death.

Al-Lail Ayat 1, and *Al Lail Ayat 2* are inter-related pieces. "By the Night as it envelops", and "By the Day as it appears" suggest hope and a light after darkness, or the notion of what goes around comes around. Verse 1 is dominated with blue and the colors of twilight, Verse 2 with the colors of the morning, a breezy atmosphere and the fresh colors of the trees. 'The Night' is also in conjunction with the work taken from *An-Najm* that comes in two versions: "By the Star when it descends", in two extremely different tones of colors. With these works, Agus seems to indicate how nature always comes in dualities: The Sun, The Moon, The Night, The Day, The Shining Stars and The Darkness (when it descends).

There are some works that can be regarded as conclusions that then serve as aphorisms, thus summarizing the whole series, such as the one taken from *An-Nahl (The Bees)*: "And He placed mountains as anchors in the Earth so that it may not shake along with you, and streams and roads for you to find course", smeared with the colors of the grass, mixed with sand-ish grey. It can refer to the refugees of Merapi who lost their livestock, reminding us how the wealth taken from earth's resources are a precious treasure that we should not take for granted.

The other verses are *Ar-Rahman Ayat 5*: "The sun and the moon follow courses (exactly) computed", which is an intriguing pick by Agus, reminding us of the greatly famous and much-quoted refrain of

the Surah: "Then which of the favours of your Lord will ye deny?", a powerful verse that serves as a warning for man to be thankful of all the benefits that has been given by God. Agus composes the piece with exploding letters with dark colors mixed with gold-yellow nuances. This is followed by the series '*Langit dan Bumi*' (*Heaven and Earth*), which is not a direct quote, but serves as a kind of 'chorus' of the two words that are often mentioned in the Quranic verses, like in *Asy-Syamsi* and *Al-Buruuj*. It depicts the same exploration of colors like *Ar-Rahman*, but with a separated emphasis with dominating brown-terracotta in #1, and yellows in #2, that once again play with dualities.

Such approaches from fresher and more open minded yet, respectable perspectives have yet to be developed further within the Indonesian visual arts scene. At times it is often regarded as something 'old-fashioned' or, causing inconvenience, due to certain narrow current interpretations of Islam. As proven by the long history of Islamic arts and also the more contemporary analyses of art of the Islamic world, art practice still offers various ways to create more understanding of the spiritualities and identities of Muslim society, articulating the things that cannot be translated within linguistic barriers, whilst providing a vast range of artistic possibilities in the contemporary art world.

UniVerse(s) is both a celebration and a reminder. Agus wants to create a tribute to nature, inviting us to look once more at the spirituality and greatness of the universe that hosts our lives, and also to always remember its power, without a sense of dread – but rather, with a sense of respect and nurture.



Dan Awan Yang Mengandung Hujan (Az Zariyat Ayat 2)

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 180 x 250 cm

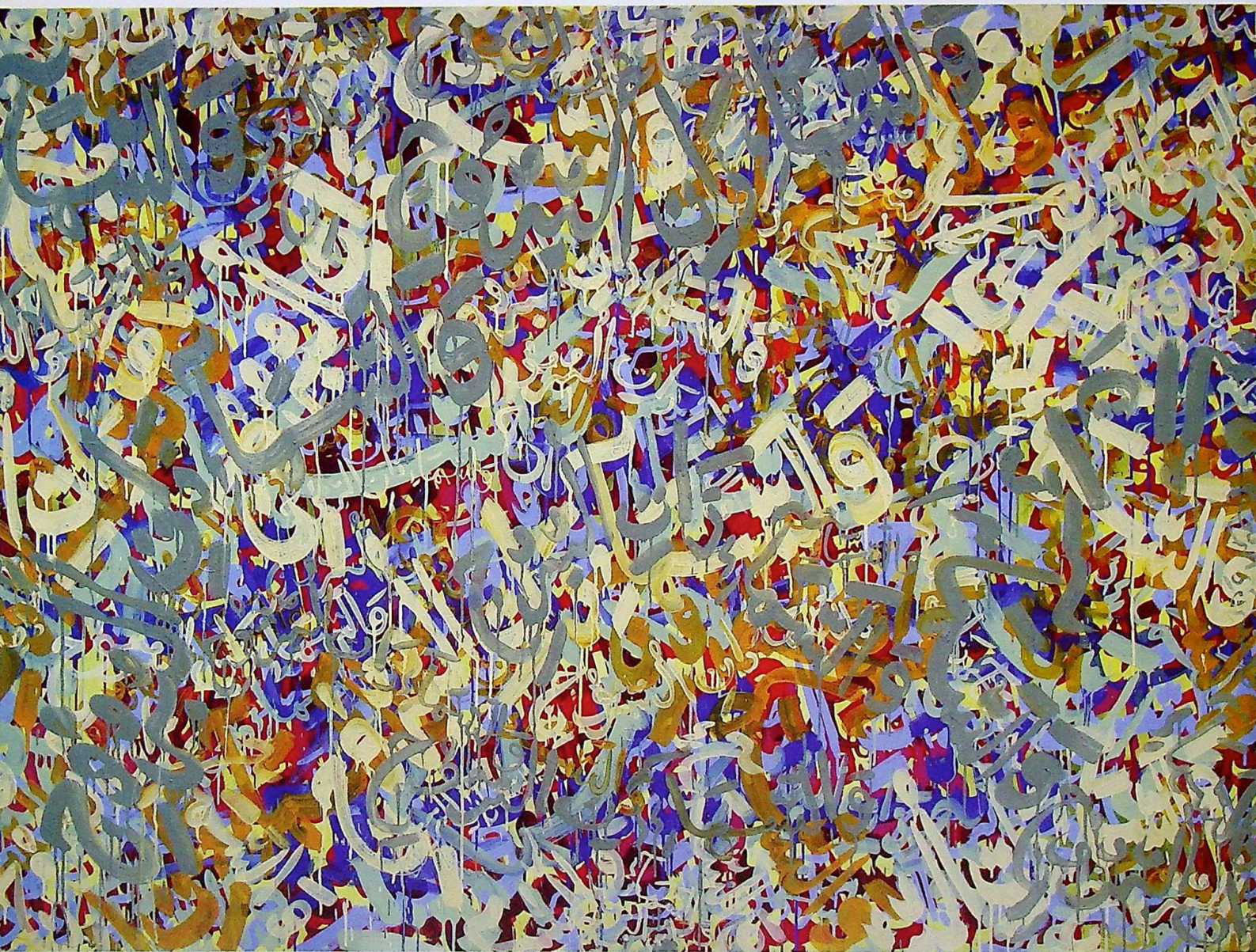


Demi Malam Apabila Menutupi (Cahaya Siang) (Al Lail Ayat 1)

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 180 x 250 cm

Demi Langit Yang Mempunyai Gugusan Bintang (Al-Buruuj Ayat 1)

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 145 x 200 cm



(Dan Dia Telah Menciptakan) Sungai-Sungai Dan Jalan-Jalan Agar Kamu Mendapatkan Petunjuk (An Nahl Ayat 5)

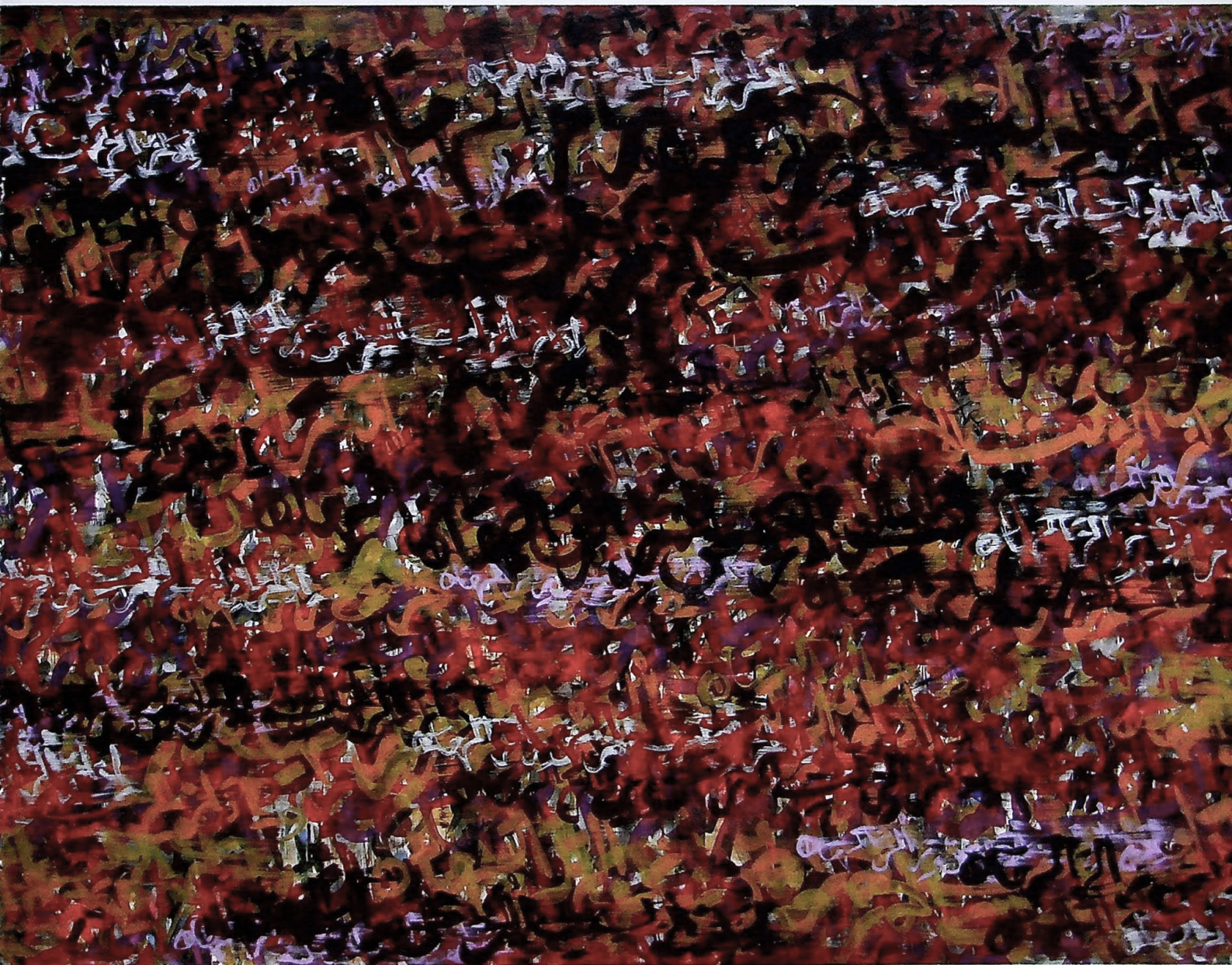
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 150 x 200 cm





Matahari Dan Bulan Beredar Dengan Peraturan Dan Hitungan Yang Tertentu (Ar Rahman Ayat 5)

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 150 x 200 cm



Apabila Bumi Digoncangkan Dengan Goncangannya (Yang Dahsyat) (Al-Zalzalah Ayat 1)

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 150 x 200 cm



Dan Gunung-Gunung Sebagai Pasak? (An Naba' Ayat 7)

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 180 x 200 cm

Demi Matahari Dan Cahayanya Di Pagi Hari (Asy Syams Ayat 1)

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 180 x 200 cm



Dan Siang Apabila Terang Benderang (Al Lail Ayat 2)

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 180 x 200 cm





Demi Bintang Ketika Terbenam (An Najm Ayat 1) #2

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 180 x 200 cm



Langit Dan Bumi #1

2011

acrylic on canvas

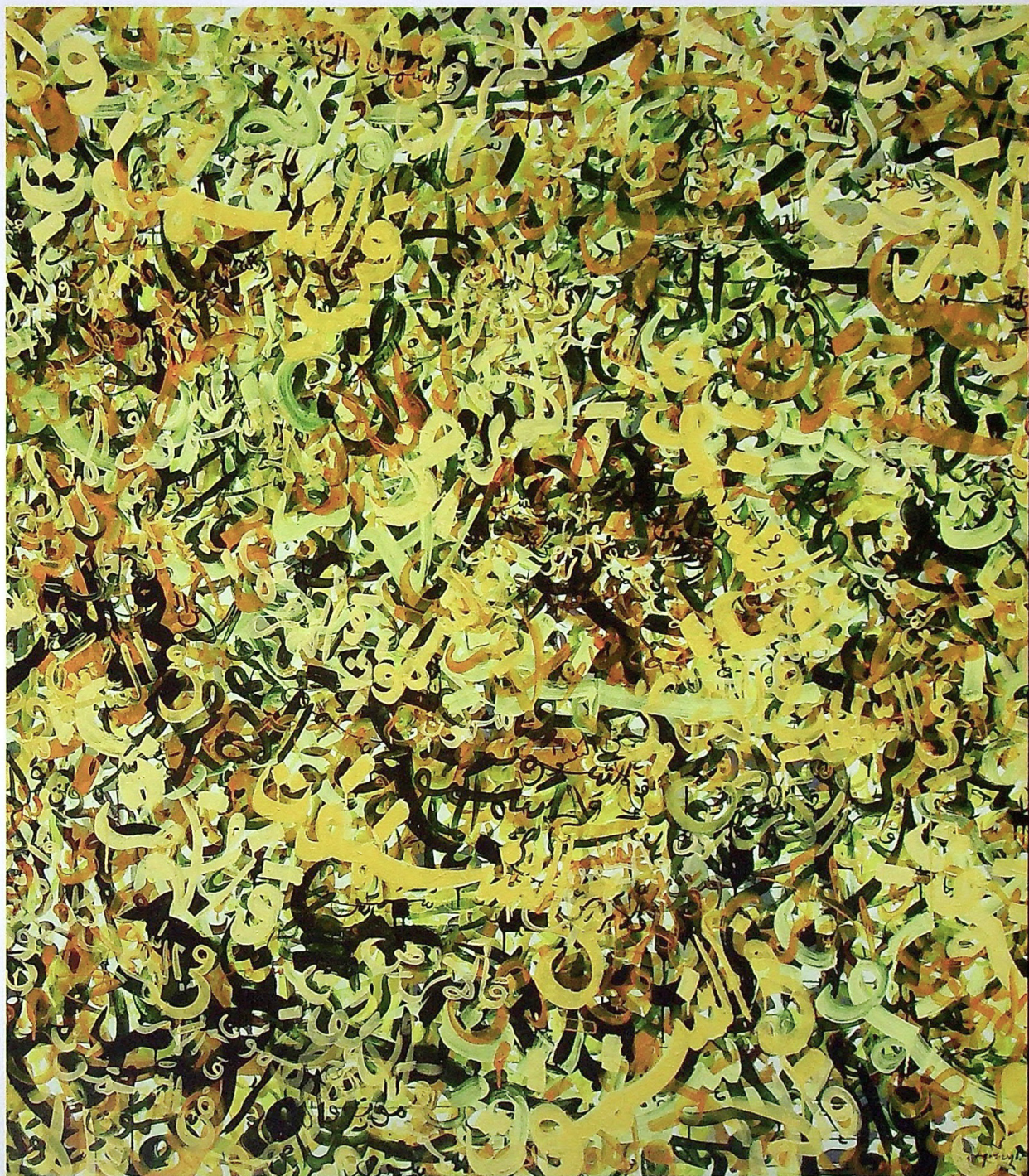
200 x 180 cm

Langit Dan Bumi #2

2011

acrylic on canvas

200 x 180 cm





Demi (Angin) Yang
Menerbangkan Debu
Dengan Sekuat - Kuatnya
(Az Zariyat Ayat 1)

2011

acrylic on canvas

200 x 180 cm

Langit Dan Bumi #3

2011

acrylic on canvas

200 x 180 cm





Demi Bintang Ketika Terbenam
(An Najm Ayat 1) #1

2011

acrylic on canvas

180 x 150 cm

AGUS 'BAQUL' PURNOMO

b. 1975, Kendal, INDONESIA

Now lives and works in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Through rhythm, texture and colour, Agus 'Baqul' Purnomo's eloquent abstractions of contemporary Indonesian Islamic calligraphy stand out amongst the formalist abstractions prevalent in Indonesian art today. A graduate of the Indonesian Institute of Art, Yogyakarta, Agus fluently combines and negotiates the tradition of representation his alma mater is renowned for, with that of Western abstraction typically of the Bandung art school; which when taken together with his chosen subject matter, advances fresh perspectives on the current narrow interpretations of contemporary Indonesian Islamic art.

selected solo exhibitions

- 2010 *Secret Garden*, Vivi Yip Art Room, Jakarta, INDONESIA
- 2009 *Recitel/Iqra!*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA
- 2008 *Vortex 8*, Tembi Contemporary Gallery, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
- 2005 *Final Work*, Indonesian Institute of Art, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
- 2001 *Ruang Tanpa Ruang*, Gelaran Budaya, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA

selected group exhibitions

- 2011 *Headlights 2011*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA
Speak Of, jogjanews.com, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Nusantara Di Atas Kanvas, Sampoerna Strategic, Jakarta, INDONESIA
Colors Of Asia, Tobin Ohashi Gallery, Tokyo, JAPAN
Uprising Detik '96, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
- 2010 *Inventory*, Pesantren Kali Opak, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Ranah Seni Tenggara, Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Faith + Reason, Manila Contemporary, Manila, PHILIPPINES
Proklamasil, Watergate Gallery, Seoul, SOUTH KOREA, and; Chang Art, Beijing, CHINA.
Artriangle 3, Balai Seni Lukis Negara Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA
Sign and After: Contemporary Islamic Art, Lawang Wangi, Bandung, INDONESIA
T R A M E N D U M, Philo Art Space @ Indonesia National Art Gallery, Jakarta, INDONESIA
4th Anniversary of Jogja Gallery, Jogja Gallery, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Artlicious, 7 Bintang Artspace, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Jogja Gumregah, Amal Untuk Merapi, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
- 2009 *Headlights 2009*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA, and; Valentine Willie Fine Art, SINGAPORE.
Fresh 4 U, Jogja Gallery, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Halo- Halo 1, Manila Contemporary, Manila, PHILIPPINES
Parameters + Play + Repetition = Patterns, Manila Contemporary, Manila, PHILIPPINES

- Blueprint for Jogja*, Tembi Contemporary, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Survey #2, Edwin Gallery, Jakarta, INDONESIA
Cogito, Philo Art Space, Jakarta, INDONESIA
Hyperlink, 7 Bintang Art Space, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Borderless World, Sri Sasanti Gallery @ Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Islam and Identity, Ritz Carlton Pacific Place, Jakarta, INDONESIA
Exposign, Jogja Expo Centre, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Joja Jamming: Biennale Jogja X, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
- 2008 *Celebrating The Differences*, Elegance Gallery, Jakarta, INDONESIA
Grand Opening of Tembi Contemporary, Tembi Contemporary, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Daya Perempuan, AzA Gallery, Jakarta, INDONESIA
Looking Inward, Elegance Gallery, Jakarta, INDONESIA
Jawa Baru, SriSasanti Gallery, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Jogja Art Fair (JAF), Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
ReUnion Detik 96, Sangkring, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
AHA, V Art Gallery, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
888, Bale Black Box Laboratory, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Ya'Sin: The Untranslatable, Jogja Gallery, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Play with 3D Objects, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Tenggara, Novas Contemporary Urban Center, Liverpool, UK
All I Want For X-Mas, Manila Contemporary, Manila, PHILIPPINES
- 2007 *Nusantara Berkisah*, Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Artriangle, Wisma Soka Gakai, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA
Abstract Revelation, Xoas Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA
Buzer, Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Ibumi, Garuda Wisnu Kencana, Jimbaran, Bali, INDONESIA
- 2006 *Art For Yogya*, Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Wedding: Tobacco & Art OHD, Magelang, INDONESIA
International Print & Drawing Biennale, National Museum, Taipei, TAIWAN
Kisi- Kisi Jakarta, Jakarta Art Award, Jakarta, INDONESIA
Terror?, Intersection for The Arts, California, USA
- 2005 *Art For Aceh*, Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
Cina Cinta, Mondecor Gallery, Jakarta, INDONESIA
Melihat Jagad Dari Kaliurang, Museum Ulen Setalu, Kaliurang, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA
One by One and One, OMBO Gallery, Yogyakarta, INDONESIA

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gallery opening hours

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