

vwfa

# THE CABLE CHRONICLE

TOMMY WONDRA



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Tommy Wondra, positioned in the center of the page.

**TOMMY WONDRA**  
8 SEPTEMBER - 2 OCTOBER 2011  
Curated by Alia Swastika

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THE CABLE CHRONICLE

A red-tinted photograph of a wall. In the center is a square electrical panel with four circular outlets. Below the panel is a date stamp that reads '08/01/09'. Several black wires run horizontally across the bottom of the frame. The background is a textured, light-colored wall.

# In Search of Contemporary Sense

by Alla Swastika

08/01/09



Contemporary fine art painting is currently confronting a great challenge in the face of progressive new media and various genres' sophistication that often pin down painting as a conventional form, marginalizing it as a medium. Unquestionably, the polarization and distinction between mainstream and marginal is profoundly associated with the art system, or art politics, and thus creates an inevitable dependency on the power holders and wielders within 'art'. On the other hand, painting remains as one of the most popular mediums, particularly when used to relate and convey the artists' personalities and vision of the world.

Referring to various approaches procreated through painting works in the last decade, we see various innovations formed around techniques and materials. The artists are trying to painstakingly re-approach the basic question of "what is painting?". In line with the fluid definition and interpretation of painting, every definition and convention is re-questioned, destroyed, and represented in a totally new perspective. These ventures of playing with definitions and conventions enable painters to 'keep up' with contemporary mediums whilst remaining faithful to the medium of painting. Other than turning into expressive works, nowadays painting is an act of thinking and is consequently, a significant part and forerunner of artists' working processes. This 'emphasized reason' is behind recent advances within the conceptual painting genre.

Consumed by their demands to 'break and crash' the definition of painting, the artists are dealing with material, form, composition, even redefining the frame. At the same time, they are trying to reinterpret the relevant subject matters to be shared on canvas. Whilst 'content' within the established painting conventions are related to style, the majority of themes represented in contemporary paintings are interrelated to what is considered as an interpretation of realities, through dialoguing and confronting the selected visual realities within the world. In the end, the content and particular point of view determines the contemporary sensibilities of one's painting. Perhaps 30 years ago, people discussed a lot about poverty and the artist became the voice to reveal the injustices, but in the present time, merely capturing an image of poverty is insufficient. Artists are expected

to have a perspective that goes beyond the general perception on it, and the reproduction of it on canvas. As a result, today's artist tends to avoid painting serious content or whatever is related to the grand narrative. Now, paintings act as a sniper aiming at trivial subjects likely forgotten: the personal and intimate, the small and marginal.

Tommy Wondra's works in his Cable Chronicle series proposes the non-grand narrative situation. In the midst of glamorous visual terror bombardiers and the vibrant contemporary life; gigantic advertisements on billboard diasporas to every corner of the city; glossy visual images in lifestyle magazine, or photo journalism depicting tragic and dramatic images on television, Tommy had to be apt to choose a visual reality that he sought after to spread on the canvas. He does not see painting as an index of multilayered social problems the world has borne, or mere aesthetic space for artists to play. For this series, Tommy wanted to stand in the middle, giving a little space to the memory of micro things in everyday life.

Cables strewn across the walls in Tommy's paintings prove how simplicity can possess its own beauty. These scattered cables are a suitable means of poetic expression for conveying the 'Third World' peoples demands and dreams for the sophisticated infrastructure that elevates them to modern world cutting-edge status. The bawdy chaotic systems, reflected from the electrical energy management claimed by these wires, enables Wondra to show how chaotic and untidy has its own aesthetic values. Within the walls of the typical Indonesian family home, with various cables hanging and archetypal graffiti on the walls, describe a live in system exclusion, which is very fluid and open to new possibilities.

Tommy sliced a micro reality that feels insignificant within the notion of a grand narrative map, and then sites it as a new subject with its own value of importance. He underlines the significance of the presence of cables in the life of modern man, associating electrical devices as symbols of new civilization. Probably, these also serve as a metaphor that illustrates the interconnection and cross-linkages of humans in this chaotic global life. The Cable Chronicles painting series emerges as a poetic metaphor, whilst at the same time being concurrently ironic to reflect on the life we live now and then.

Supposing that Tommy was not very much aware of the importance of the ideas possibly emerging from his paintings; as far as I understand his creation process, painting is a process of playing for him. He played with the visual reality bombarding his life, then selected a small part of this 'everyday life'. Tommy enjoys the process of observing the petty and microscopic through an intense visual sensor, playing with the composition of cables and meaningless texts in his paintings. In his earlier paintings, he drew various trivial objects such as rocks, electrical poles, and other forgotten items.

The playfulness appears to be a vital element in Tommy Wondra's working process. He does not play around with the existing painting definition or construct a new convention on paintings, as we will constantly find in many contemporary painting artists lately. He would rather play around with how we perceive the micro realities. In a broader framework, one can say that Tommy Wondra is actually playing with subject matter.

Tony Godfrey sees this playfulness as an important subject; for example, in Jane Lee's works. He is interested



in how Jane Lee plays with the action of painting: 'ripping' canvases, pasting collages, squeezing, and other physical acts, all related to the desire to re-question the definition of painting. Citing Gadamer, Tony saw that in creative work, there is always a desire for artists to respond to challenges. Attempts to answer this challenge are a personal quest of each artist and during that process, the artist must be a part of the game.

Tommy Wondra, with his cables, answers the challenges he created: how to summarize the complexities of his world on canvas, without losing the essential meaning. Tousled, chaotic wire coils are the representation of meaningful visual realities for him. What is important and unimportant in the study of contemporary painting is now irrelevant in the middle of layered visual reality and multiple representations. In his own way, especially through his firm brush strokes, where the illusion of realism he is trying to get rid off -no matter how we can always clearly see the marks made by the painter- he creates a fairly clear boundary between form and approach to contemporary visual art. Instead of describing something in the most realistic ways, Wondra distances himself from visual reality. Hereupon, we realized that instead of a photographic 'adaptation', we are looking towards a painting.

The Cable Chronicle series gives us a space for rethinking the fundamental tool in our increasingly mutually connected lives. As he mentioned: we are now building a compound, though secretly living in a period where desires for stronger self-affirming is inhabiting, and what seemed to be unique is identical to something created by someone out there.

**Senyawa Terikat #1**

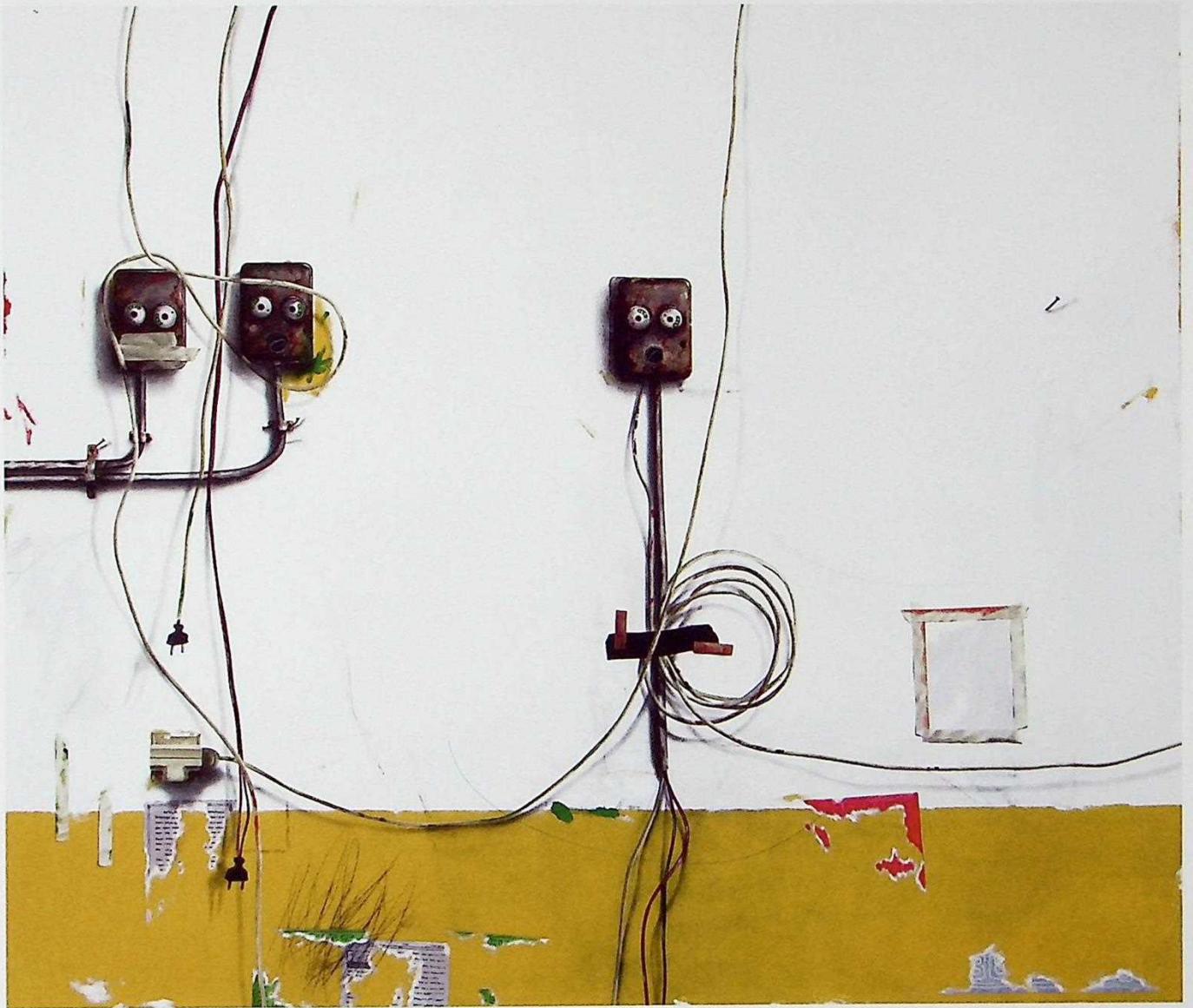
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 160 x 200 cm





**Senyawa Terikat #2**

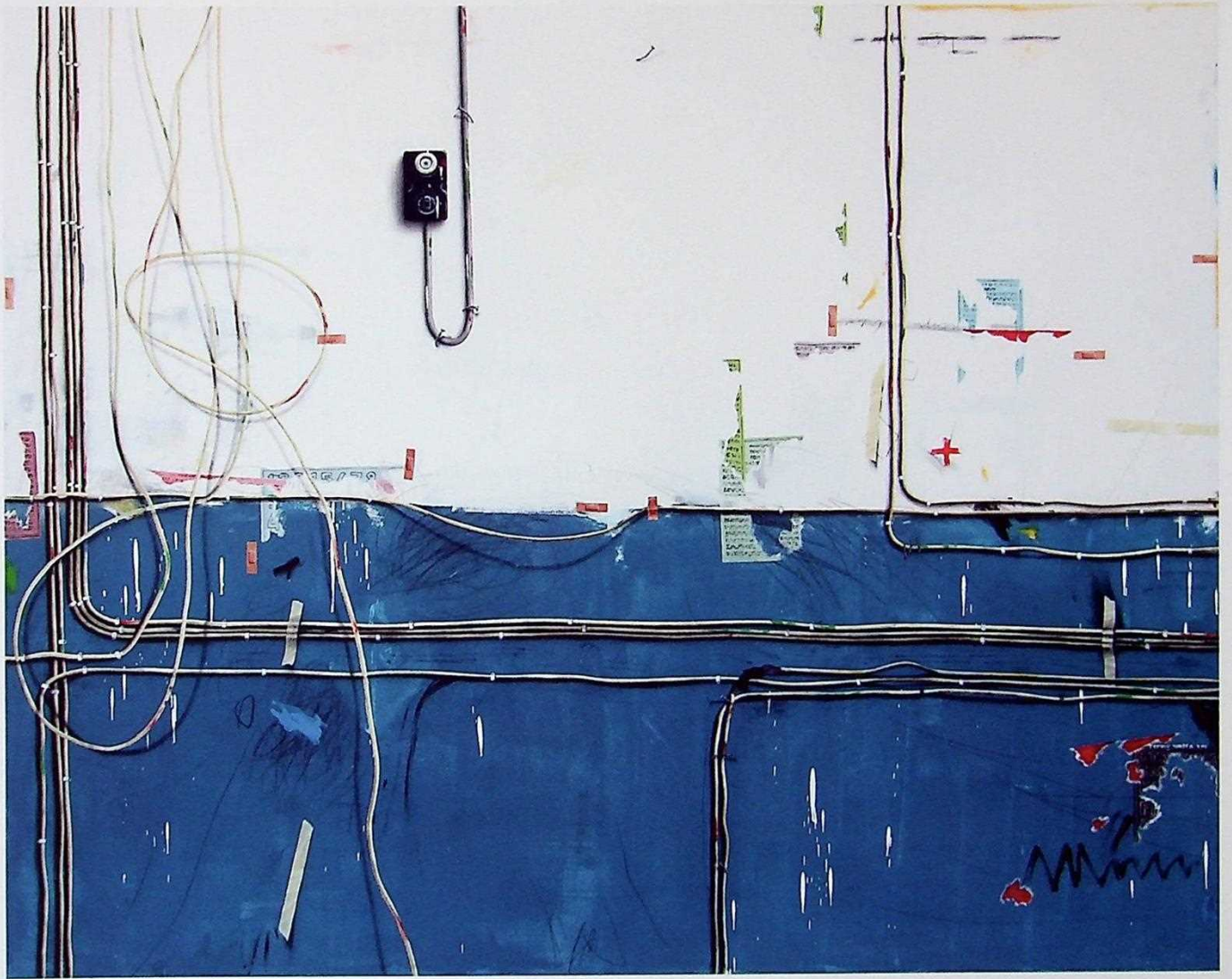
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 160 x 200 cm





**Senyawa Terikat #3**

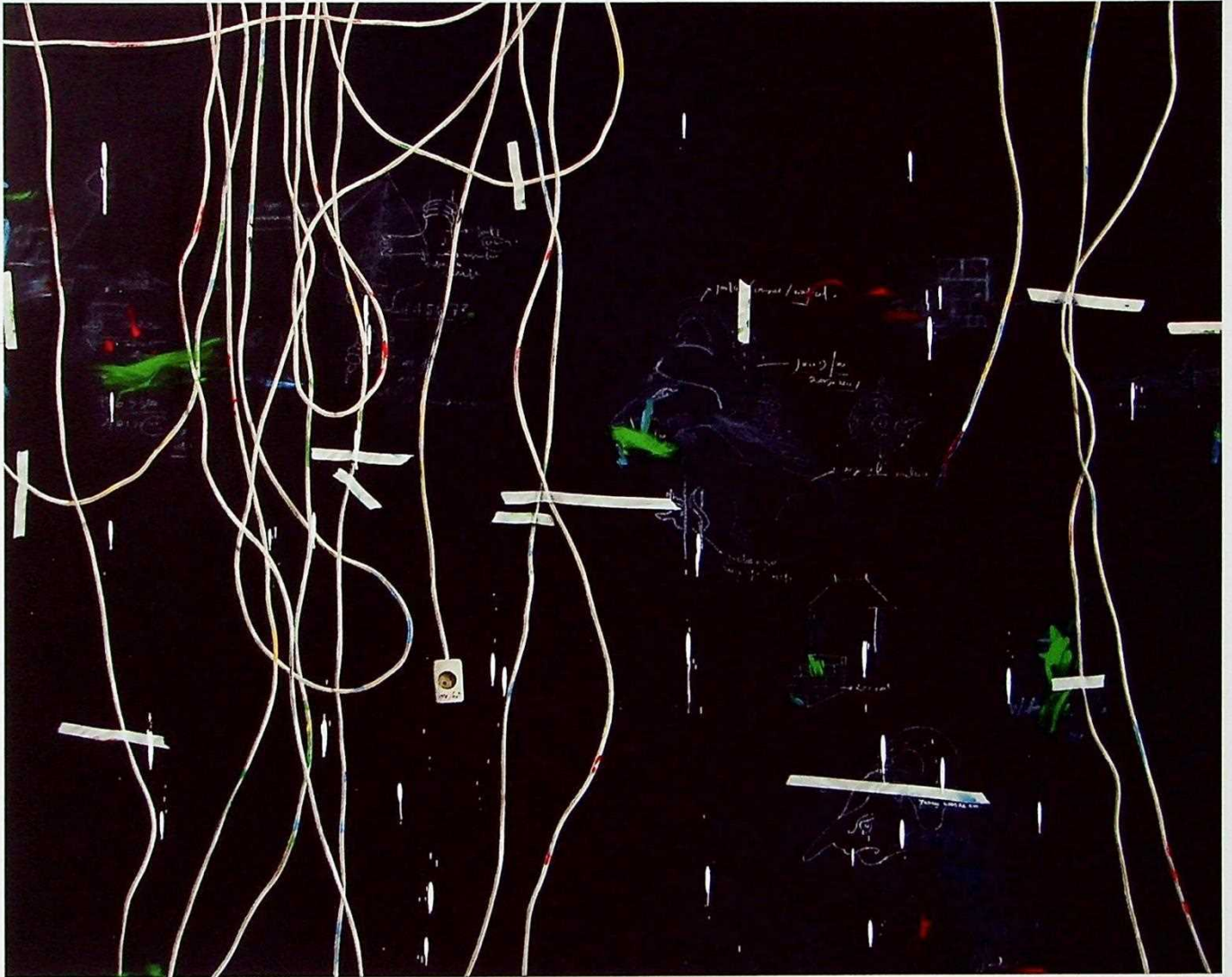
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 200 x 250 cm





**Senyawa Terikat #4**

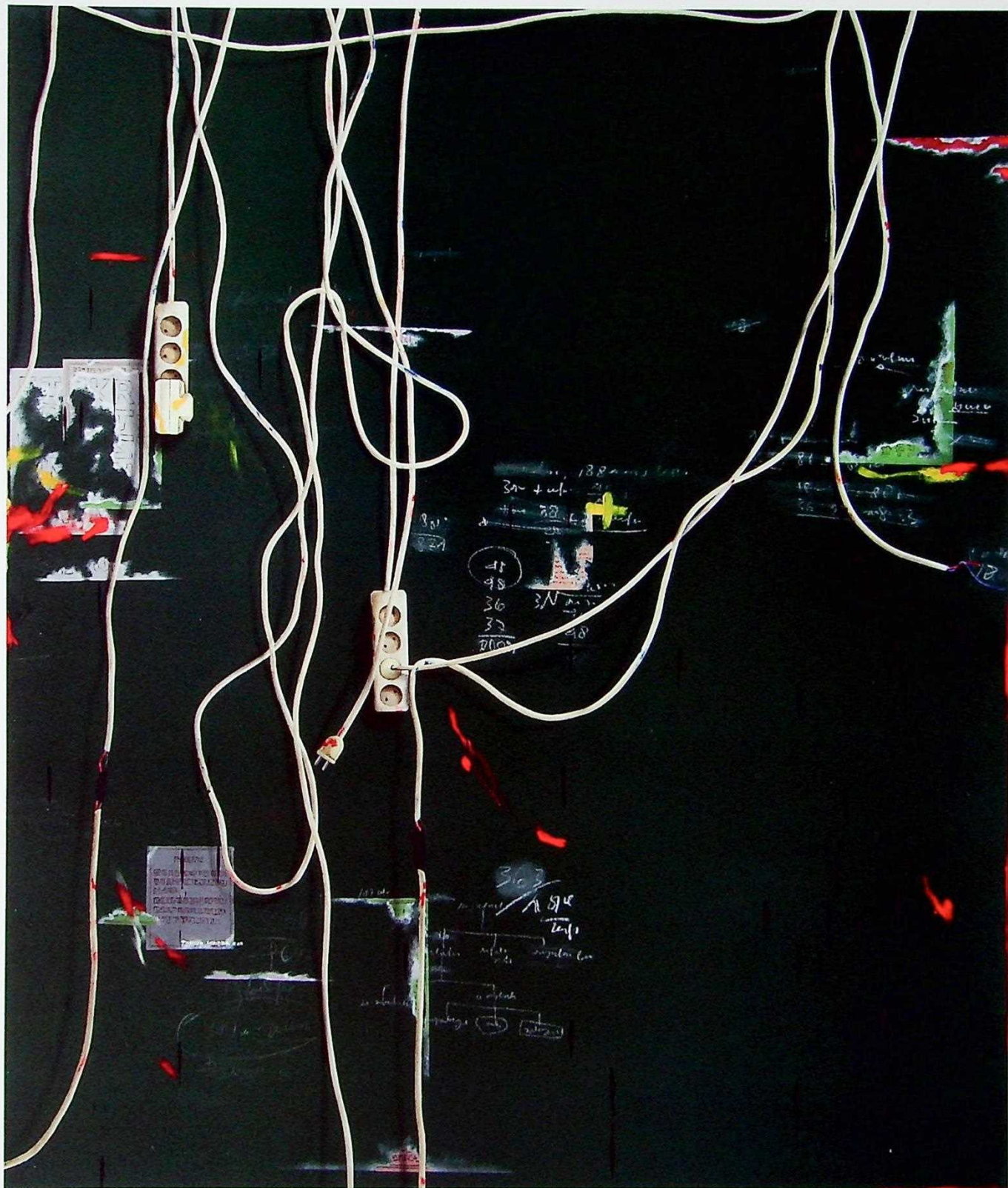
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 200 x 250 cm





**Senyawa Terikat #5**

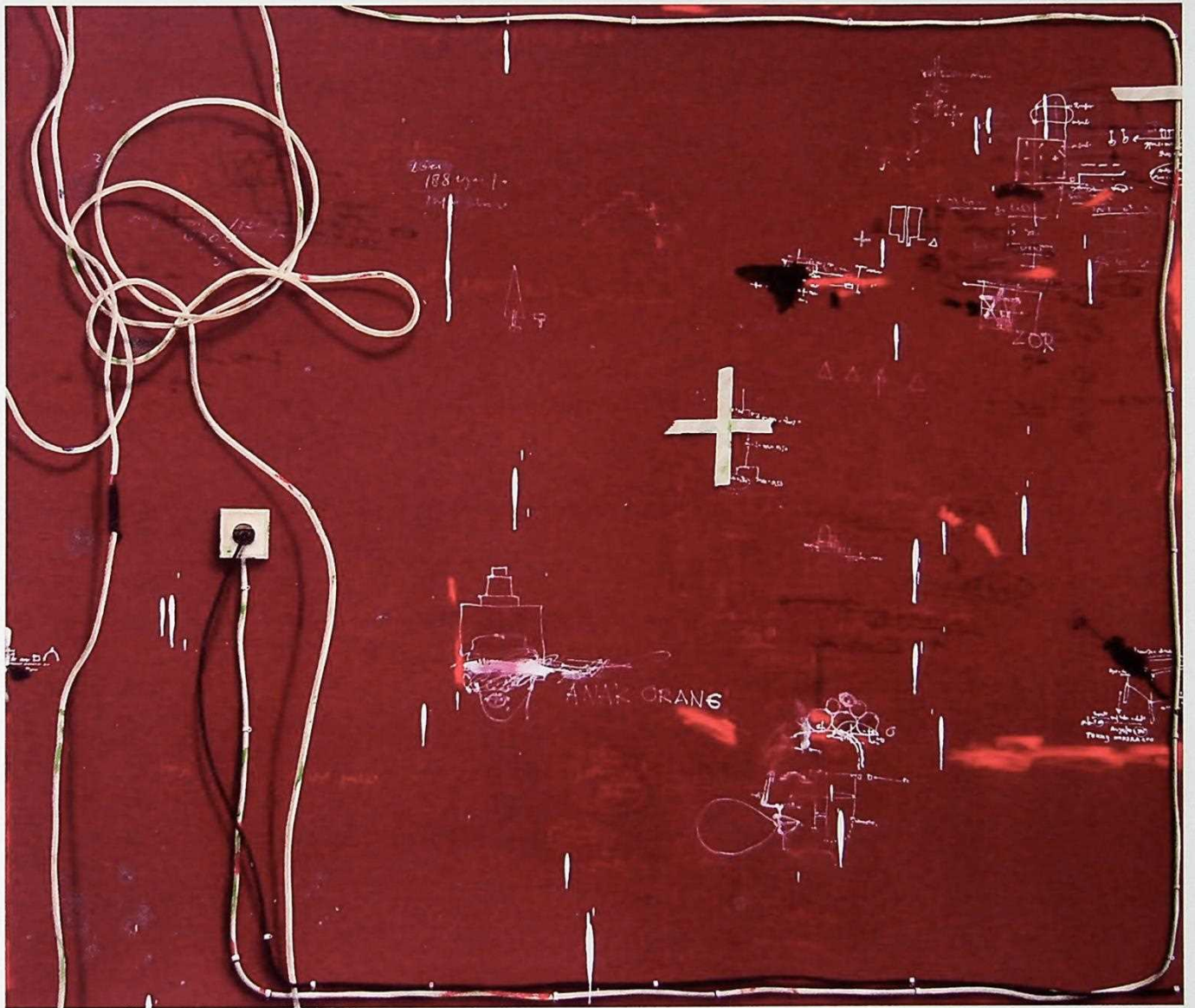
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 200 x 160 cm





**Senyawa Terikat #6**

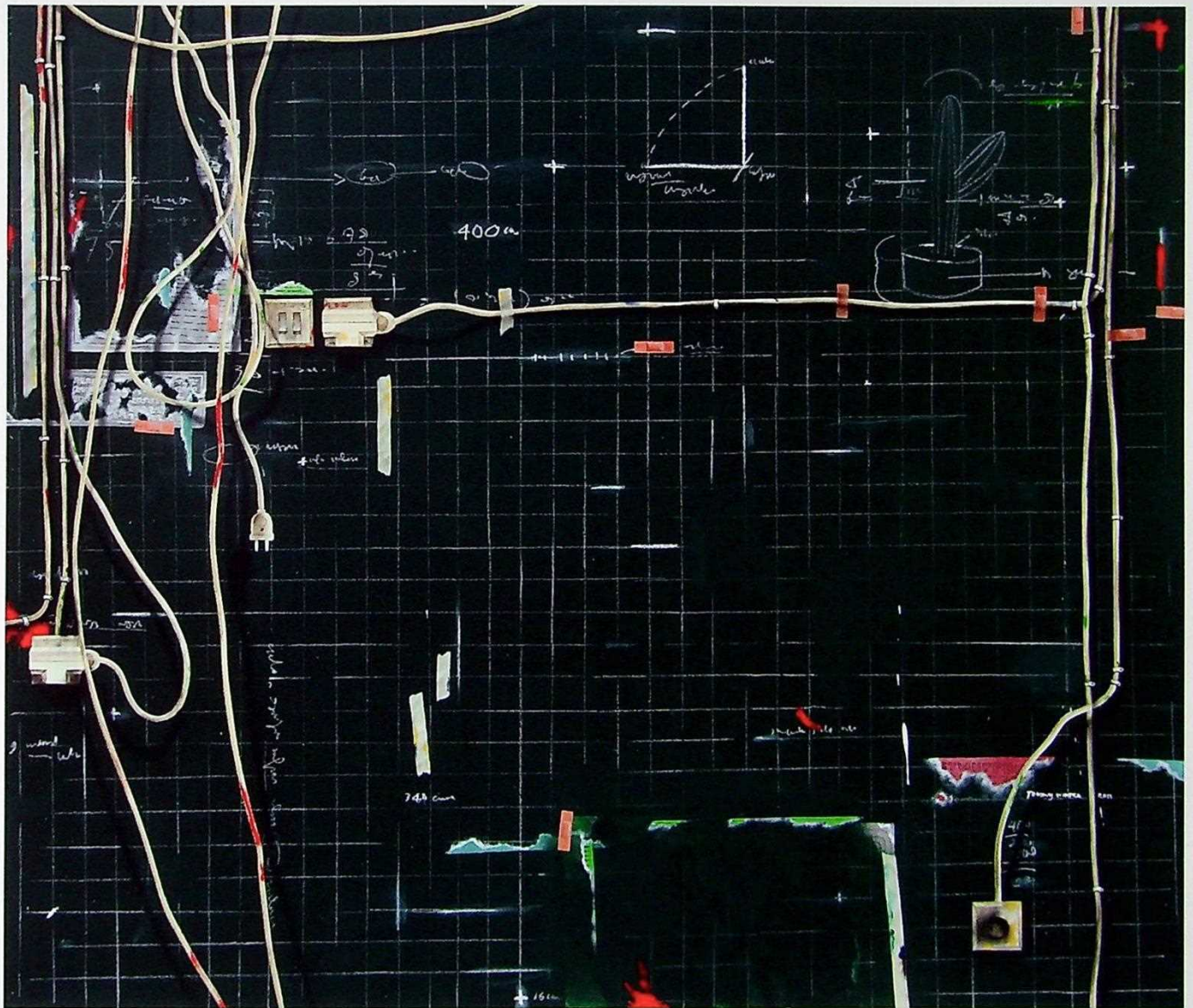
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 160 x 200 cm



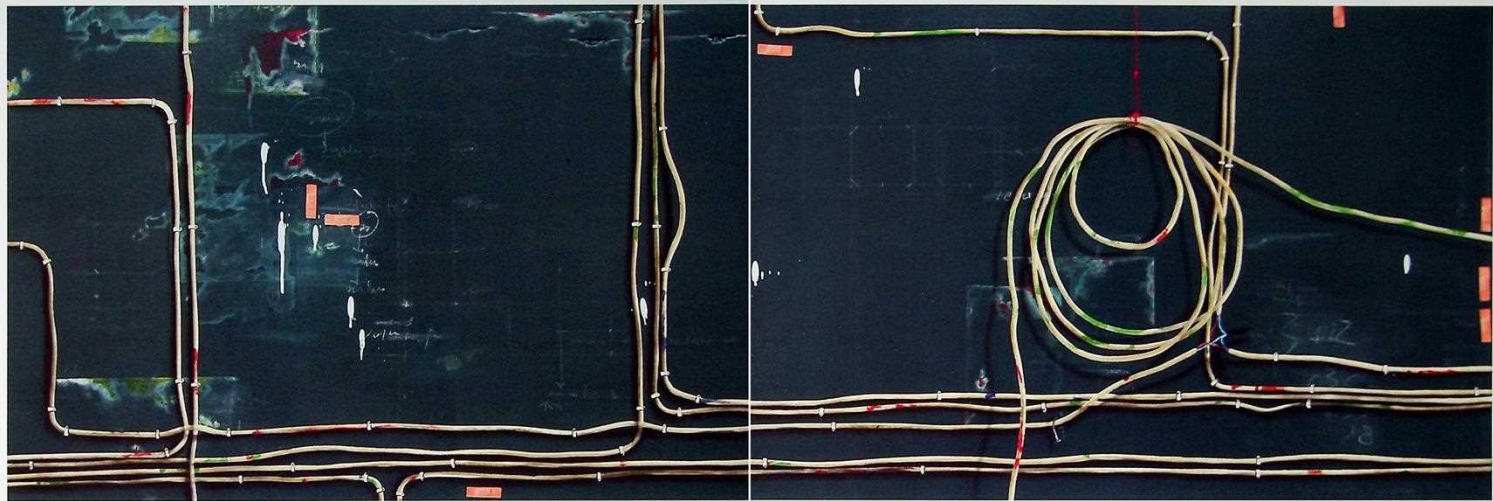


**Senyawa Terikat #7**

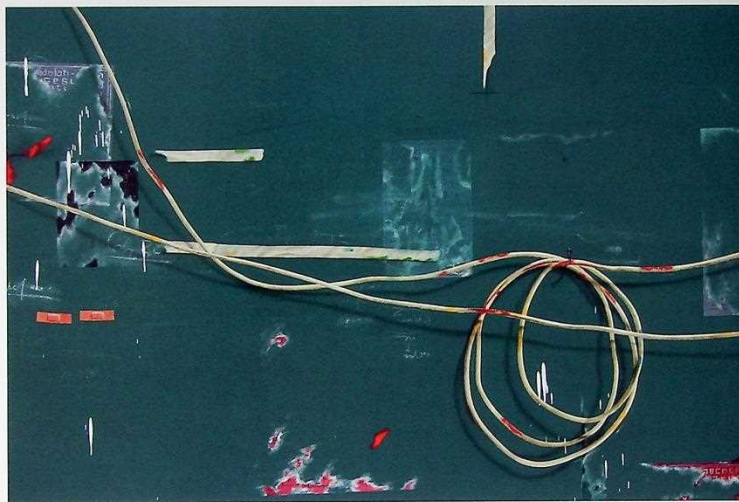
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 160 x 200 cm





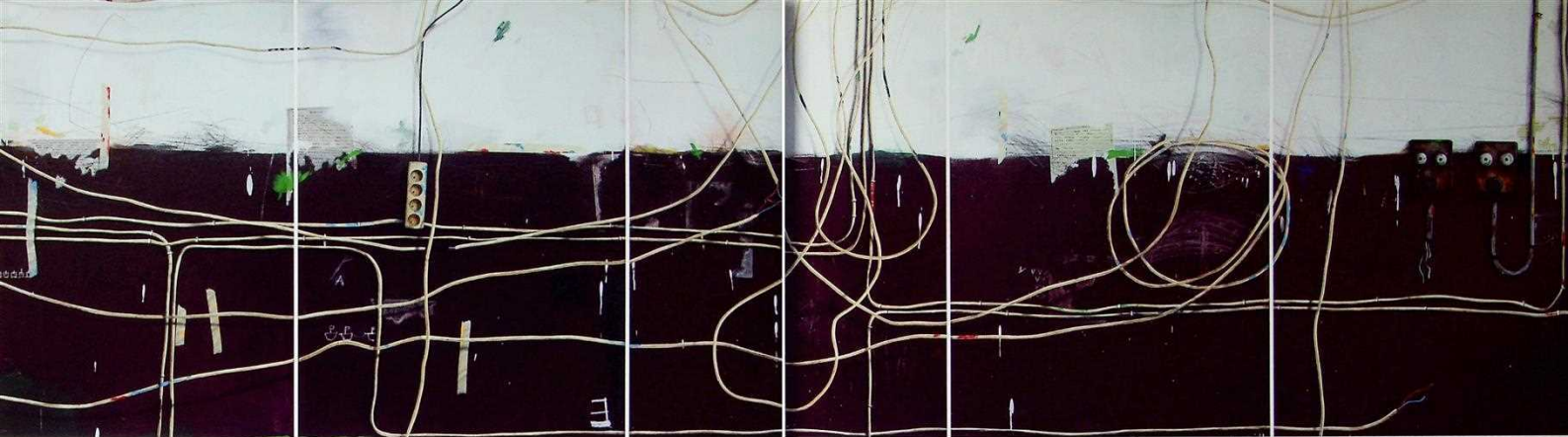


Senyawa Terikat #8  
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 100 x 300 cm



Senyawa Terikat #9  
2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 100 x 300 cm





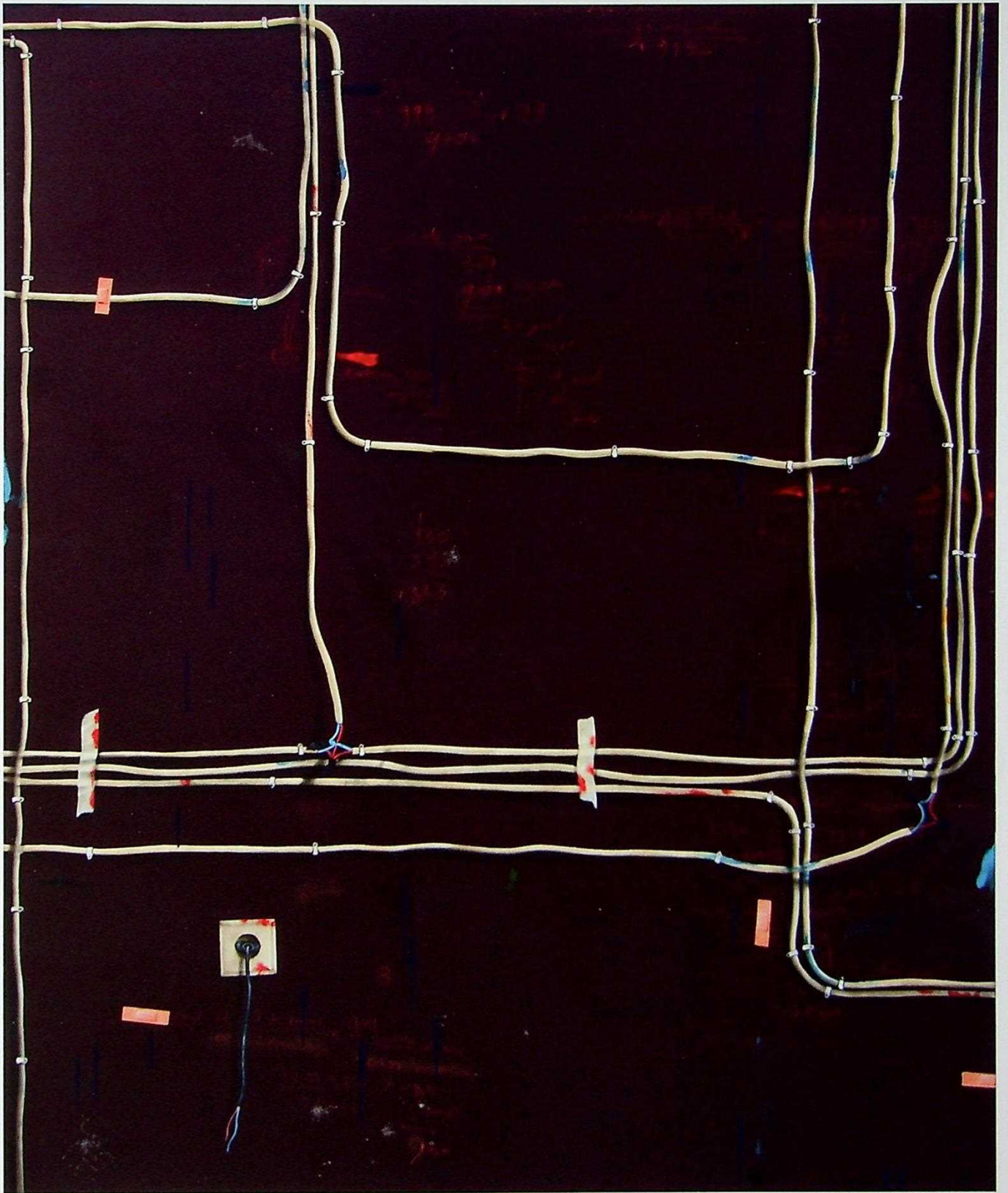
Senyawa Terikat #10

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 120 x 500 cm, pentaptych (120 x 100 cm each)

**Senyawa Terikat #11**

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 175 x 145 cm





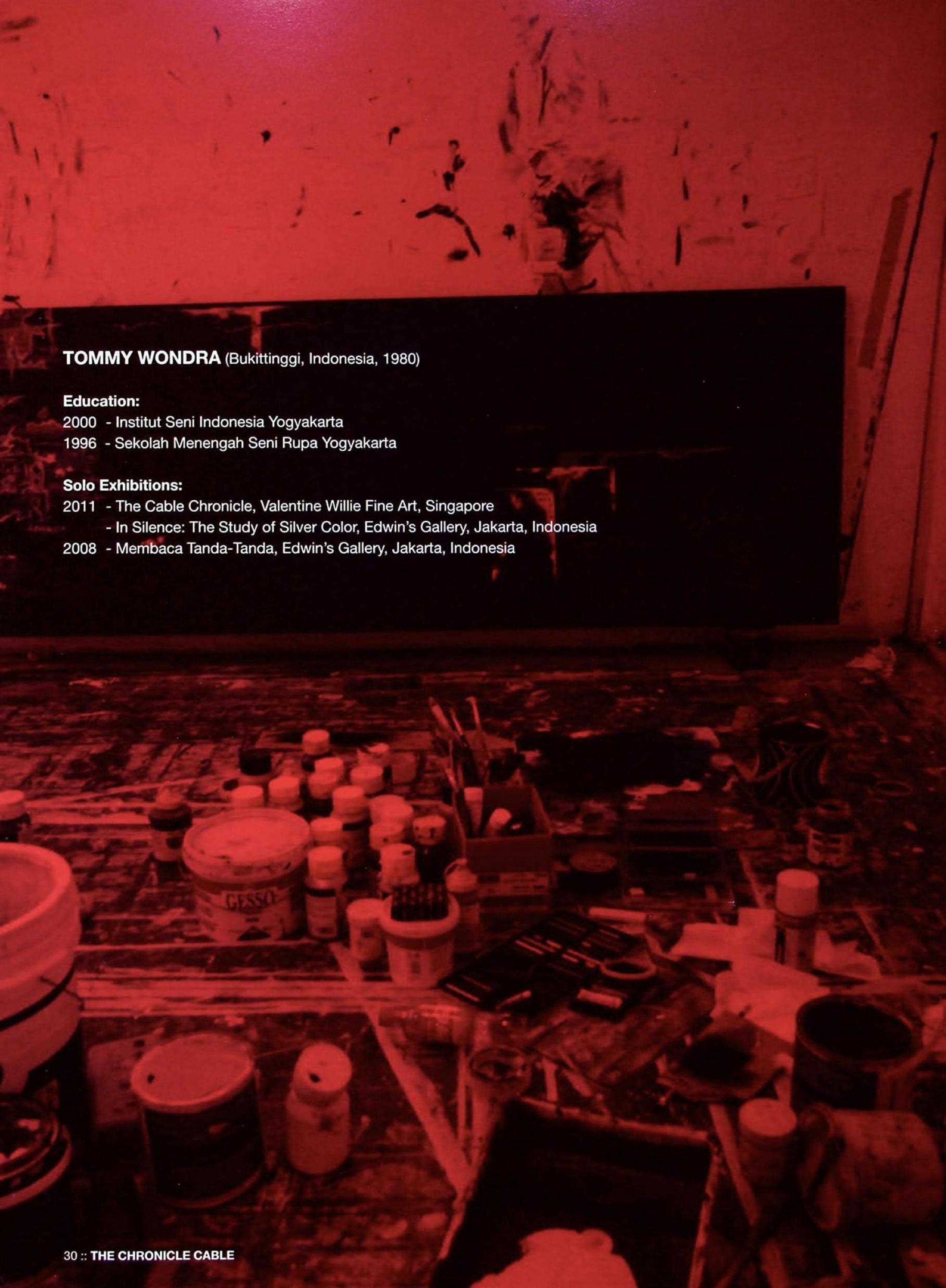
**Senyawa Terikat #12**

2011 :: acrylic on canvas :: 200 x 250 cm









**TOMMY WONDRA** (Bukittinggi, Indonesia, 1980)

**Education:**

2000 - Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta

1996 - Sekolah Menengah Seni Rupa Yogyakarta

**Solo Exhibitions:**

2011 - The Cable Chronicle, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Singapore

- In Silence: The Study of Silver Color, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia

2008 - Membaca Tanda-Tanda, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia



### **Selected Group Exhibitions:**

- 2011 - Homo Ludens, Emmitan Gallery, Surabaya, Indonesia  
- Ilustrasi Cerpen Kompas 2010 Bentara Budaya Jakarta-Yogyakarta-Solo-Bali Indonesia  
- Art Stage 2011, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore, organised by Edwin's Gallery
- 2010 - Korea International Art Fair, Coex, Seoul, South Korea, organised by Edwin's Gallery  
- Bakaba, Sakato Art Community, Jogja National Museum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- Dua Kota Dua Cerita, Semarang Gallery, Semarang, Indonesia  
- Space & Image, Artpreneurship Center Ciputra World, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2009 - Reality Bites, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- Bazaar Art Fair, Ritz Carlton-Pacific Place, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- Highlight of Edwin's Raharjo's Collection, 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Edwin's Gallery, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- Borderless World, 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Srisasanti Gallery, Taman Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- Reach Art Project!-Act One Edwin's Gallery, Plaza Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- Poli(cromatic) 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of V-art Gallery, Bentara Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- C-Art Show, Grand Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- Trap(esium) Painting Exhibition, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2008 - Jogja Art Fair #1, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- Manifesto, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- A New Force of South East Asia: Group Exhibitions of Indonesian Contemporary Artists, Asia Art Centre, Beijing, China (In collaboration with Edwin's Gallery)  
- Survey, Fine Art Exhibition, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- IVAA Book Aid Vol.2 Fine Art Exhibition, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- Tommy Wondra & Gusmen Heriadi, Soheon Gallery, Korea (In collaboration with Edwin's Gallery)  
- Tommy Wondra & Gusmen Heriadi, Nine Gallery, Gwangju, Korea (In collaboration with Edwin's Gallery)  
- Tommy Wondra & Gusmen Heriadi, Godo Gallery Soul, Korea (In collaboration With Edwin's Gallery)
- 2007 - Indonesian Contemporary, 1918 Artspace, Shanghai, China (In collaboration with Edwin's Gallery)  
- Conscience Celebrate, September Art Events, Gandaria City, Jakarta, Indonesia (In collaboration with Edwin's Gallery)
- Episodes, Tommy Wondra & Gusmen Heriadi, Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia
- 2006 - Common Grounds a Glimpse of Contemporary Art, YSRI, Gallery Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- Jalin Bapilin, Benteng Vredeburg, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- Fragments (Kecil Itu Indah 13), Edwin's Gallery, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- Pratisara Affandi Adikarya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2003 - Painting Exhibition With Group "Kereta 2000", Benteng Vredeburg, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- Guilin Yuzi Paradise International Sculpture, China
- 2002 - Sepiring Indonesia, Gelaran Budaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- Diversity in Harmony, Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 2000 - Menuju Seni Kedepan, Painting Exhibition with Group "Kosong", Benteng Vredeburg Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- Dunia Yang Sebenarnya Ada, Auditorium SMM, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 1999 - Sakato III, painting exhibition with group Sakato, Benteng Vredeburg Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- Yogyakarta Art Festival 11<sup>st</sup>, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- Dalam Kecarut Marutan, Malang, East Java, Indonesia  
- Fine Art Exhibition, Art Centre Denpasar, Bali, Indonesia  
- Painting Exhibition with Group "Kosong", Benteng Vredeburg, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
- SMSR Anniversary, Dewan Kesenian Malang, Malang, East Java, Indonesia
- 1998 - Sanggar Linggar Sari, Bandung, Indonesia  
- Painting Exhibition, Yayasan Pendidikan Kebudayaan Building, Bandung, Indonesia  
- Phillip Morris Indonesia Art Award, Galeri Nasional Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia  
- The 10<sup>th</sup> Yogyakarta Art Festival, Benteng Vredeburg, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 1997 - Painting Exhibition With Group "Sakato II", Taman Budaya Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

### **Awards:**

- 1999 - Best Work Art Painting Pratisara Adi Karya SMSR Yogyakarta, Indonesia
- 1998 - The 80 Finalist of Guilin Yuzi Paradise International Sculpture Awards, China  
- The 100 Finalist of Phillip Morris Indonesian Art Awards, Jakarta, Indonesia



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

God Almighty  
Both My Parents and Family  
My Lovely Wife and Daughter  
Yoyok S and His Family



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Valentine Willie Fine Art, Singapore

39 Keppel Road, Tanjong Pagar Distripark, #02-04,

SINGAPORE 089065

T: +65 8133 1760

vwfa.singapore@gmail.com

www.vwfa.net

