

## Press Release

*Traverse – Art Momet Jakarta Onlie 2021*

*ISA Art & Design Gallery 2021*



ISA Art & Design is honoured to present Supernova, A duet show of Jompet Kuswidananto and Aaron Taylor Kuffner, will launch on June 14<sup>th</sup> until July 31<sup>st</sup> 2021, at ISA Art and Design Gallery at Wisma 46, Jakarta. Supernova was selected as a title to this show for its characteristic rapid succession between light and darkness. Two polarising qualities within one chain of events; ultimate brightness preceding all-consuming darkness. At the same time, imagining Supernova as the way humanity meets its impending demise has a sense of poeticality in them. One final blast of utter chaos and beauty before nothingness engulf whatever remains.

In this duet show, both Jompet Kuswidananto and Aaron Taylor Kuffner's body of works has multiple paralleling elements that seem oppositional but actually speak the same breadth of narrative. In its formal aspect, both Kuswidananto and Kuffner's work incorporate light, sound, and movement elements. However, they do it in almost opposite methods. While Kuswidananto's installation creates chaotic noises, Kuffner's sets his frequencies to emulate divine and spiritual peace; where Kuffner's work reflects the

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ambient light surrounding it, Kuswidananto's work emphasises darkness through its illumination.

Conceptually, the artists share a similar sentiment towards the history of Java and the history of humankind in general. They believe that history exists as a record of discourses and flawed actions for the future generation to analyse, take apart, re-read and learn. What renders history ineffective in carrying out its benefit to humanity is when it is overly-preserved and romanticised. In the end, these frozen mystified stories serve only a decorative purpose, like rows of untouched, pristine trophies without the memory of its experience.

Both Kuswidananto and Kuffner treat fragments of traditions and memories of Java in a Foucauldian manner. It does not examine historical documents to present a monolith of chronological truth but to excavate bits of strategies, past wisdom and discourses into contemporary applications. In manifesting these approaches into artworks, both artists seem to gravitate towards monumentalisation, the works taking their beholder's attention hostage and expands their presence beyond the area they occupy.

Both equally acclaimed in their respective scenes, Kuswidananto and Kuffner brought their own twists into this quest to reveal the past within the present, history within memory, the shadow behind the shine. Because of the criticality of both artists, "Supernova" becomes a unique show where meaningful discourse may be presented in a splendour of visual ensemble to its audience. Thus, it is an honour and treasured opportunity for ISA Art and Design to create this exhibition in our new space and present the works to their best potential.

## AARON TAYLOR KUFFNER

Aaron Taylor Kuffner is an American born conceptual artist, based in New York. Kuffner's dynamic work reaches far outside conventional forms of representation: it actively engages its audience and pushes art to serve society. His pieces often take the form of multi-year projects that require in depth research, collaboration with field experts and the development of new specialized skill sets. Each project provides unique conceptual tools that further the evolution of consciousness through the experience of beauty and the sublime.

Kuffner's work demands a multi-faceted approach to art. Through his work Kuffner has become a noted musician and composer, a skilled metal sculptor, machinist and engineer, an ethnomusicologist, a prolific street artist and social activist, a painter and inventor, a theater director and producer of hyperbolic events.

For over a decade Kuffner has immersed himself in the study of Indonesian Gamelan music. While living for several years in Java and Bali and attending the Institut Seni Indonesia in Yogyakarta, he learned to play the Gamelan, researched the process of making the instruments, cataloged various tuning modalities, and developed his own electronic notation system, all the while gleaning gamelan's cultural and spiritual significance. In 2008, shortly after returning to New York he was awarded an Artist in Residency with renowned technologist Eric Singer at the League of Electronic Musical Urban Robots. The fruit of their collaboration would be the construction of the world's first fully robotic gamelan orchestra.

Following the residency, Kuffner began a new body of work entitled *The Gamelatron Project*, which marries Indonesian ritual and sonic tradition with modern robotics. In this series of work, Kuffner creates sonic kinetic sculptures from traditional Bronze, Brass and Iron instruments retrofitted with mechanical mallets on sculptural mounting systems.

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The pieces are connected to a network that transcribes his digital compositions into an array of electrical pulsations that results in a ghostly musical automaton.

Over the last 7 years Kuffner has created 21 Gamelatrons of various size, scale and purpose. The project strives to expand the legacy and creative cultural power of gamelan through innovation. Kuffner's *Gamelatron Project* exposes us to the rich and profound nature of resonance and its effect on the psyche. He creates a harmony in the tension of fusing the East and the West, the Modern and the Ancient. The Gamelatron's contrasting materials and mechanisms tell us a story of globalization and modernization. The Gamelatron Project re-contextualizes tradition and grants artistic license to creatively re-engineer its potential role in a changing society. Kuffner uses exhibitions of the *Gamelatrons* to create sanctuaries both in public and private spaces. He views the body of the work as an offering to the observer.

Kuffner has performed or presented work more than 400 times in 19 countries in the last sixteen years. Kuffner exhibits with Sundaram Tagore Galleries in New York, Singapore, Hong Kong and International Art Fairs. He has notably received grants, in-kind support and awards from: The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts in association with the Clocktower Gallery, The Trust for Mutual Understanding, The Experimental Television Center, The New York Council for the Arts, Ableton Gmhb, The CEC Artslink, Scope Arts, Artist Wanted, Techshop, The New Orleans Airlift, The Indonesian Foreign Ministry, The Dharmasiswa Scholarship, The Berlin Arts Council, The European Commission, I-D Media Berlin, Schloss Brollin Art Labor, The James F. Robison Foundation, The Soros Foundation, Swiss Air, The Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation and The US Artists International partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

## Jompet Kuswidananto

(b1976, Yogyakarta) started as a musician, producing records and performances while studying communications science at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta. The eclectically trained, polyvalent artist, who lives and works in Yogyakarta, remains profoundly attached to Indonesia and rendering its turbulent history. He became interested in sociology and political science, firstly through his university studies, then through practical training in the archipelago's music and wayang, traditional shadow theatre. Afterwards, he went on to learn about visual art from the local community in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. His productions developed, and he now works both individually, on installations, videos, sound art and performances, and collectively with Teater Garasi, a contemporary theatre group based in Yogyakarta.

In his visual art, he has used his knowledge in traditional shadow theatre and other forms of performing arts to develop a personal style of multimedia specialisation. This spatialisation aims to provide both aesthetic pleasure and accounts of the changing identities that have shaped and indeed continue to shape individuals and communities' fate in Indonesia and beyond. Conceptually, his works explore Indonesia's history and the complexities of contemporary life in a globalised world. His practice focuses on issues of politics, colonialism, power and mass mobilisation in the context of post-reformation Indonesia. He questions the struggle of power and chaos throughout the Indonesian colonial past still felt until today. Above all, Jompet's artistic intention is to construct his imaginary world, using traces of the past and current documents, whilst leaving freedom of interpretation to whoever discovers his work.

Kuswidananto has exhibited in multiple international exhibitions, such as the Yokohama Triennale Japan in 2008, Lyon Biennale France in 2009, Moscow Biennale for Young Art and Taipei Biennale in 2012, a museum show at the National Gallery of Victoria in 2019, and the most recent one at the same year, at aA29 Project Room Milan.

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In 2014, Jompet garnered a major award for emerging Asian artists, the Prudential Eye Award, for his installation work.