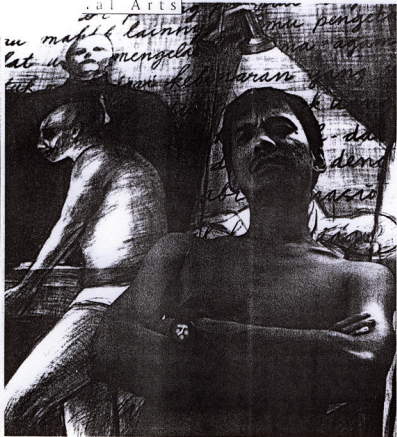


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# AGUS SUWAGE

BORN 1959, INDONESIA

**H**umanitarian is how Agus Suwage describes his art. His work is also provocative, political and resolutely contemporary. Whether it is "Indonesian" is of little interest to the 39-year-old painter. "I take whatever," he says of his creative approach. "I look for metaphors." Agus's paintings and installations have been exhibited from Cuba to Korea and won him the 1996 Philip Morris Indonesia Art Award.

Agus's tortured images protest against violence and repression. Demonic figures and twisted postures

often dominate, but among them the "light of hope" (the title of a recent exhibition) also shines through.

Agus believes the economic crisis will force artists to confront society more directly. For him Indonesia's descent into chaos has proved an overload of inspiration. The Java-born artist has been unable to work since the May riots, a constant barrage of events leaving him no time to transmute his inspiration into art. "The Third World is in a chaotic situation, but this creates ideas for works," says Agus. "Maybe too many."

## Talking Pictures

**THE PRESENT AND** the future are looking good to Russel Wong. And it is through the Singapore-based photographer's lens that we have seen the better side of many icons of our times.

Wong is best known for his celebrity portraits of figures as diverse as actor Jackie Chan, supermodel Cindy Crawford and former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew. His work has appeared prominently in a number of international and regional publications, including *Asiaweek*. How does Wong picture what he does? "It's about good lighting, good design and trying to get the [positive side of a] personality across," says the 37-year-old. "Primarily, it's about making people look good. That's how I see it."

Before long we will be seeing his ideals of beauty looking good on the big screen. Wong is preparing to shoot his first movie. An English-language film set in Singapore, it will be a romantic comedy "about the nice things in life," according to Wong. And of course, "it will have beautiful images."

