

DEPARTMENTS



"CONFRONTING THE LIONS," (DETAIL), OIL ON CANVAS, 26" X 36", BY MACHYAR GLEUENTA; SEE PAGE 84

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CALENDAR



WISDOM *in the* ELEMENTS of DEVASTATION

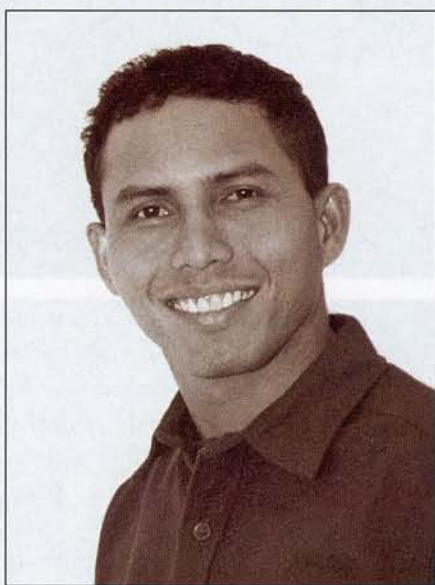
Neoclassical art by Machyar Gleuenta (see page 84) is on view July 19-Aug. 24 at The Indonesian Embassy, 2020 Massachusetts Ave., NW, Washington. Proceeds from sales of artwork to benefit victims of Hurricane Katrina and the Indonesian tsunami. 202-775-5337.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT: ZYDECO CRAYZ; "OVERFLOW 2," ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 48" x 36", BY ANNE RECHTER; AND "GOLDEN CAST OVER THE SHORE OF MALACCA," OIL ON LINEN, (DETAIL) 48" x 36", BY MACHYAR GLEUENTA



a DISCIPLINED APPROACH

BY ALICE ROSS



MACHYAR GLEUENTA

In the decade or so since he left Sumatra to study art and work as a professional artist, Machyar Gleuenta has maintained close ties to his homeland. The anxiety he felt upon hearing of the devastating tsunami that struck his native province of Aceh on December 26, 2004, turned to anguish when he learned that 19 of his relatives lost their lives in the disaster. This month, he is mounting an exhibition of recent paintings, drawings and etchings in response to that event as well as Hurricane Katrina.

"Some elements in these new works reflect images and situations that my nephew and other survivors told me about," says Machyar. "I want to shine light onto a dark tragedy and bring out of message of positive rebirth and hope for the future with these works." Machyar calls this installation *Wisdom in the Elements of Devastation*.

Growing up in the village of Matang Glumpang Dua in Aceh, Machyar dreamed of living and working in the United States. And it was his artistic talents that enabled him to achieve that dream.

After working as an artist's assistant in Aceh, Machyar moved to Jakarta, Indonesia, where he began to attract notice. Soon after

his participation in a 1994 group exhibition at Jakarta's National Gallery, Machyar was awarded a scholarship to the Maine College of Art in Portland. Later, he studied at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

Machyar's academic training introduced him to the style in which he works full-time today, classical realism. "I was not very familiar with classical realism before I came to the United States," he says. "But I always liked to draw things as I saw them—very detailed. I could have gone into conceptual art. I tried abstract, and I did it very well. But I knew I wanted to do more."

From his Springfield studio, Machyar points to the tiny, fine lines of "The Peaceable Kingdom," a 1998 etching: "I looked at

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*Visual art is an attempt to transform the raw world
into something we'd love to see—an idealized world.*
”

FACING PAGE: "THE PEACEABLE KINGDOM," ETCHING, INK ON PAPER, 8" X 10"



Rembrandt's etchings and saw that they showed a powerful imagination. Etching takes a different level of skill; it requires draftsmanship, unlike pencil drawings where you're able to erase as needed."

Among Machyar's most prestigious commissioned works is a 2004 portrait of former United Nations ambassador Andrew Young. Over the course of several meetings with Young, Machyar acquainted himself with his subject and set about translating Young's life of civil rights activism and political and diplomatic service into a cohesive painting.

"I found him very down-to-earth, very humble," says Machyar. "I was very comfortable with him. I asked him what he would like to see in his painting. I got the sense that he wanted to see a story. But he gave me carte blanche, saying, 'Well, you're the artist.' It was quite a relief to me."

Shown seated at a desk, Young is surrounded by objects that reveal the man's character and history. Books by Martin Luther King Jr. and W.E.B. DuBois, as well as Young's own autobiography, *An Easy Burden*, are seen on a nearby table. An American flag and a United Nations flag anchor a corner of the room. One side of the painting offers a glimpse of the Atlanta skyline, while the other side features a globe and other mementos. A closer look at this portrait reveals a paint-



he says. "And the light was better."

In addition to his prowess in the two-dimensional realm, Machyar includes sculpture in his portfolio. "Philosopher" features a bearded man emerging from a shell. This piece, says Machyar, "symbolizes how we change in every stage of life. We can mold ourselves to the degree we want. We change our form constantly."

ing, which Machyar based on a photograph of Young participating in a civil rights march.

Machyar attended the April 2005 unveiling of his portrait at the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University in Atlanta. In his remarks after the unveiling, Young said, "For me, this painting links us with the world, with the needs, with the tragedies and hungers."

Although Machyar accepts commissions, there are other concepts competing for his attention. "In a perfect world," he says, "I would prefer to do my own work." By way of example, he points to his haunting landscape, "Dungeness," depicting the ruins of the Thomas Carnegie mansion on Cumberland Island, Georgia.

Another landscape dominated by a structure is "Dolobran Before Noon." In an unexpected twist, Machyar opted to paint the back view of the Philadelphia mansion. "It showed the immense scale of the building,"



Perhaps "Philosopher" is a fitting metaphor for the artist himself. "Visual art is an attempt to transform the raw world into something we'd love to see—an idealized world," he says. Such an effort requires great discipline, he adds: "We train ourselves—our hands—over and over every day until it becomes a skill."

This summer, Machyar is teaching a classical landscape painting class focusing on the ways of the Old Masters. He also serves as chief editor and founder of the Web-based publication, *Acheh Times*, which, for seven years, has served as an alternative outlet for news and opinion relating to Acheh and other areas of Indonesia.

The Embassy of Indonesia in Washington, D.C., presents an exhibition of Machyar's work July 19 through August 24 (see Calendar for details). Proceeds from the sale of works will benefit

tims of Hurricane Katrina and the Indonesian tsunami. In a statement announcing the embassy's sponsorship of the exhibition, Ambassador Sudjadnan Parnohadiningrat said, "While this event is being held because of similar disasters in the U.S. and Indonesia, it is also a bridge of goodwill and friendship between our two countries, and we hope that it can be a silver lining to the storm clouds that caused so much destruction."

For more information about Machyar's work or classes, visit www.mkfinearts.com.

FACING PAGE TOP: "DUNGENESS," OIL ON CANVAS, 36" x 24" AND "PHILOSOPHER"; THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: "SAILORS BY THE CLIFF," OIL ON LINEN, 39" x 29"; MACHYAR WITH ANDREW YOUNG, APRIL 2005; AND "AMBASSADOR ANDREW YOUNG," OIL ON LINEN, 72" x 54"