

MUTABLE TRUTHS

PERSPECTIVES IN PHILIPPINE CONTEMPORARY ART

15 MARCH – 30 APRIL 2017



Image: Mark Salvatus, *Gates*, 2015, HDV, color, silent, loop (video still)

The partnership between La Trobe University and Ateneo de Manila University, now in its 17th year is fortified by multi-faceted programs that are both academic and cultural. Since 2005 this partnership was given another dimension through an artist exchange program where the Visual Arts Centre of La Trobe University has served as a host to one of the winners of the Ateneo Art Awards, a Philippine contemporary art prize given to an artist under 36 years old.

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Mark Salvatus

Gates, 2015. Video installation HDV, color, silent, loop

Particularly positioned at the entrance of the exhibition, *Gates* examine the dialectics of welcoming and unwelcoming. As the exhibition introduces Filipino artists to the audiences of La Trobe, and as inspired by Dan Brown's novel *Inferno* which refers to Manila as the 'gates of hell', its varying forms, all of which typical to city, feign an opening and an entry way, only to be closed off at the next transition. This never-ending loop explore the nuanced layers of security, public-private relationships, urbanism, power and boundaries in the public sphere.

2010 VAC La Trobe Residency, Bendigo

Lyle Buencamino

No Fighting in the Museum 1 and *No Fighting in the Museum 2*, 2009. Oil on canvas (72 x 96 in)

Lyle Buencamino is known for his large-scale paintings based on still shots of movies produced by the now defunct LVN Productions in the 1950s- what is often referred as the Golden Age in Philippine cinema. The series *No Fighting in the Museum* began as a reflection on propriety and behavior in institutions and other similar public spaces. As his work often involve a search for his identity as a painter and artist of his time, Lyle Buencamino took a particular interest in this tongue-in-cheek read that forwards a domestication of his own thinking. It poses a direct reading of the work, laying great trust in humor as its foundation.

2007 VAC La Trobe Residency, Bendigo

Ronald Ventura

Human Study 1 and *Human Study 4*, 2017. Graphite and acrylic on canvas (48 x 72 in)

Human Study 5, 2017. Fiberglass, resin and polyurethane paint (79x 46x 20 in)

Ronald Ventura has consistently engaged his practice in the craft of image making and continues to do so while employing a sundry of forms – paintings, drawings, print, mixed media works and sculptures. In his *Human Study* series, he deals with the concept of mutation between humans and the animal kingdom, raising questions about the superiority of one over the other. Rendering a hyperrealist image, Ventura melds human faces with animal features, carefully selecting specific elements to switch, thus fashioning an ideal entity.

2005 The Cross Arts Project Residency, Sydney

Martha Atienza

RESOLUTION A.468 (XII) 2017.

Sound installation, aluminum sheets with Dayton Exciters (196 x 60 cm, 17 min loop)

Martha Atienza isolates another facet of her months long travels at sea, done during her residencies at New York Art OMI, Hope Liverpool, Artesan Singapore and La Trobe University Australia, with *RESOLUTION A.468 (XII)*. Her obsession with maritime runs deep with her family's history, her grandfather being a lighthouse keeper, her father being a sea captain, her mother having worked for Holland America Line, a shipping company, and her brothers currently working for the shipping industry. Recorded sounds and vibrations of ports and cargo vessels generate an immersive installation, allowing viewers to somehow step into and traverse the same path that she has taken in her journey.

2012 VAC La Trobe Residency, Bendigo

Poklong Anading

Shared Residence, 2017.

Poklong Anading's *Shared Residence* interrogates the underlying processes, frameworks and practices in exhibition making, specifically focused on the terms 'to share' and 'to reside.' The activity of lending and borrowing explores the dispersion of information – be it physical or digital—as the times shift into contemporary iterations. It explores the formation of meaning as things enter and leave spaces, particularly in the connections it creates and removes. Meanings that surround objects, whether a book or an artwork, transitions as it is 'shared' from a public space, such as a gallery, library or museum, to the private space of the borrower. This movement also sheds light to the kind of viewership and exchanges created, as well as the delineation between what is public and what is personal in today's world.

2006 The Cross Arts Project Residency, Sydney

Charles Buenconsejo

Charles Buenconsejo, Relative Nothing, 2015. Video installation

Relative Nothing, 2015. (52min & 32sec video loop) will also be shown in the auditorium.

With the use of his collection of video footages from the opening day of his solo exhibition at the Visual Arts Centre of La Trobe University, *Charles Buenconsejo* visually depicts the manner by which our consciousness retrospects and introspects. Depending on the movement in the space, strategically installed motion detector cameras continuously record how the room is utilized, automatically turning off and leaving black spaces on the grid when it is empty. Audiences then partake in an ongoing loop wherein there is a blurring of the subject's and the object's positions in such surveillance. This parallelism Buenconsejo creates between man's warped sense of remembering and the straightforward characteristic of a camera's recording acknowledges our engagements with the digital age.

2014 VAC La Trobe Residency, Bendigo

Leeroy New

Grotto 2017. Site specific installation, wire, epoxy, cable ties, found objects from Bendigo and Castlemaine, Variable dimensions

Leeroy New's artistic practice finds strength in the public sphere, evident in the communal processes employed and the interactive nature of most of his works. He acknowledges how his 2009 residency in Bendigo significantly expanded his creative process by realizing the possibility of non-traditional and industrial materials such as cable ties and flexible tubes. He fashions worlds and its inhabitants that are imagined but are nonetheless suggestive of current conditions and personalities.

Grotto relates to the quandary residents of Metro Manila face each day- city traffic! After discovering a large supply of car parts from recycling plants around Bendigo, New decides to focus on the general urban scenery. He creates a grotto or a cave with red taillights and hubcaps to re-contextualize a chamber for meditation into the motionless space in a traffic jam. In his words: "The sea of red lights is a signal for stillness." A local commuter may also associate the chamber as the inside a vehicle where one is forced to meditate just to survive the daily commute of a least three to four hours.

2009 VAC La Trobe Residency, Bendigo

Kawayan de Guia

Lifetime Substance Control, 2017. Control Mixed media (Triptych: 64x 132x 4 in)

In participation to the ongoing struggle against the current government's war on drugs, of which he has been a personal witness to, Kawayan de Guia pronounces his frustrations and existential wanderings in the form of this 3-panelled painting, *Lifetime Substance Control*. What began as a continuation of his anatomical drawing exercise while working on the horses for the Aichi Triennale in Nagoya last year has turned into a methodical consolidation and deconstruction of the various objects and patterns around his studio. Symbolisms and imagery of the artist's and the nation's past and present circumstances merge, revealing the scent of lingering death and the invasion of fear in the everyday.

2011 VAC La Trobe Residency, Bendigo

Marina Cruz

Gregorio, 2009. Embroidery on printed canvas using UV ink (70 in x 60 in)

Goodbye, 2017. Oil and embroidery on canvas (24 x 18 in)

For years, Marina Cruz has tirelessly archived her family's history through the preservation their personal affects in her works. Glimpses into their narrative are made manifest with every carefully laid out piece of clothing that is painted or printed on canvas. Embroidered allegories about her relatives' lives turn into badges for their triumphs, devotions and frustrations. The piece *Gregorio* is a tribute to the artist's late grandfather, represented by the formal shirt or 'barong' that he used to wear. Symbolisms of his life animate the surface, with the heart denoting his being a devout catholic, his illness, the enlargement of the heart, and his kindness. *Goodbye* on the other hand looks into her mother and her twin, as she utilizes the camisole that they used to wear together as children. Sewn in are imagery that speak of the sisters' eventual separation.

2008 VAC La Trobe Residency, Bendigo

Buen Calubayan

Instructions on Viewing the Landscape, 2017. Site-specific installation, variable dimensions

Buen Calubayan creates another version of *Instructions on Viewing the Landscape* as he continues the contemplation of his positioning in the grand narrative of art history in the Philippines. Through the creation of diagrams, as well as putting on display archival materials, photos, books and notes relating to his experiences, he is able to methodically activate objects as well as viewers to participate in the mechanisms of framing history, time and space. Specifically for this piece, he extends the practice beyond the self by incorporating the entire experience of exchanges and exhibition making through the collection of materials that span before and after his own residency at VAC-La Trobe. Calubayan takes off from his own standpoint and negotiates not only with the objects and space at hand, but also the past, present and future that it carries with it.

2013 VAC La Trobe Residency, Bendigo

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