



DONDE, WHERE, SAAN?
Oil on canvas
188 x 183 centimeters
2011



SENSE, SATE (details)

LEO ABAYA
b. 1960

- 2004 ■ MA Fine Art (Painting), Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, U.K., 2004
- 1995 ■ BFA (Painting) magna cum laude honors, UP College of Fine Arts, Diliman (UPCFA)
- 1982 ■ BS Economics, Holy Name University

EXHIBITION

- 2011 ■ SENSE, SATE, Tin-aw Art Gallery, Makati City, Philippines
- 2009 ■ FABRICANA: THINGS MADE, Utterly Art Gallery, Singapore City, Singapore
- 2008 ■ TROPICAL, BAROQUE, Utterly Art Gallery, Singapore City, Singapore
- 2005 ■ FIGURES AND GROUNDS, Pinto Art Gallery, Antipolo City, Philippines
- 2003 ■ CORPORA IMMOBILIA, large-scale installation work, Corredor Gallery, UP Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
- 1997 ■ BLISS, West Gallery, SM Mega Art Walk, Mandaluyong City, Philippines

The artist lives and works in Quezon City. He teaches theory and studio art practice as an associate professor at the UP College of Fine Arts, Diliman where he is presently the Graduate Program Coordinator. He occasionally practices as a curator and is also a prize-winning production designer for film and for theater.

The artist acknowledges the assistance of Abril Dominic Valdemorro in the production of the sculptures, and Issay Rodriguez, Kat Falaria, Joseph Gabriel, Lee Paje, Berns Cruz, Lou Lim, Bea Alcala, Buen Abrigo, Carlo Aranton, Ioannis Sicuya, Adeo Sta. Juana, Orlan Joaquin and the young women of Sta. Maria, Bulacan for their help in the work Sense, Sate.

LEO ABAYA
SENSE,
SATE



SENSE, SATE
Installation of cold cast marble relief multiples
10 x 10 centimeters (each piece)
Variable dimensions
2011



Upper G/F, Somerset Olympia Makati
Makati Ave. corner Sto. Tomas St.
Makati City

GALLERY HOURS
Monday - Saturday, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm

CONTACT
+632 892 7522

www.tin-aw.com

© 2011 TIN-AW ART MANAGEMENT INC.

All rights reserved. No part of this catalogue may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior consent from the artist and publisher.



21 OCTOBER - 12 NOVEMBER 2011



LOOKING GLASS
Cold cast bronze, clear cast resin, grosgrain
42 x 74 x 21 centimeters
2011

Abaya speaks to such a condition and tries to characterize it by, first, foregrounding iconic references to the senses and, second, locating them within situations of excess. The latter is cast through the device of the appendage, with the evocation of the senses cathected to a medium, such as a looking glass that is a gargantuan eye morphing into a monocle or the multi-breasted indigenous figure Mebuyan that becomes a scapular that becomes a television screen with an indentation of a nipple from which to suckle. In this scheme, the artist dwells on how bodies mediate and how media embodies so that both are aesthetically embedded in the “empire of commonplaces.” For it is surely imperial, specifically because the artist also traces these contemporary mediations to colonial history and the shifts in belief from, let us say, Mebuyan to a scapular. Moreover, he hints at the privilege of this kind of sensing as gleaned in the mirror frame that he appropriates and turns into an eye; it is a gilt one, highly elaborate in its decoration, and yet also redone, recast so that it sends off a semblance of something else. It is, therefore, a readymade that is worked on with deliberate affectation, even with the sentimentality of a designer or artisan.



MEBUYAN SCAPULARS
Clear cast resin, cold cast marble and velvet ribbon (4 editions)
38 x 47.5 x 10 centimeters (each piece)
2011

Another dimension to this sensual imperium is the idea of artifice itself within art history. There is a piece that is a bust conceived in so-called classical style, its mien aspiring to posterity, but with a detail that disrupts the expectation for this projection. Instead of hair growing from the scalp, we find nipples studding the cranium. In this makeup of a statuary, the head/heart dichotomy is threatened because the head becomes affective, practically encrusted with glands, vulnerable to those who need to be sated. Another aspect of this work is the orange life buoy around the figure’s neck, creating a contrast between the formality of the sculpture and the distress that the circumstance conveys. Again, Abaya impedes our perception of what is sensuous because he draws our attention to a possibility of what might constitute it at the same time that he alerts us to its possible excess.



DAMA NARANJA
Cold cast bronze, urethane paint over cast resin, nylon
61 x 36 x 48 centimeters
2011



DAMA NARANJA (detail)

This surfeit of the senses finds a different articulation in a simulacrum of organs resting on small resin hearts repeated infinitely through a trick of a glass, polished by unemployed women in a town in Bulacan. Again, the repetition is a signifier of surplus that finds resonance in a painting of a tongue issuing from a large mouth with a void at its core. And, finally, three works reflect on rule and reverence by way of representations of buttocks with nipples; wine on glass with nose; and an ecstasy pill or host with ear. The juxtaposition of the body with objects of desire takes the issue of longing to the vicinity of the ideological, with the creaturely condensing in the worldly, in the very fraught institution of art.

This current preoccupation of the artist with the sensate lets him probe his fascination with the material, the ethical implications of desire and the power it holds on those who are beholden to it. He spins the prospect of “less humanity” in images of fractured figures, faceted from a telling detail. Still and all, his practice invests in the body and more particularly in casting and even recasting, infusing objects with the patience of manual toil or the time-consuming fabrications of multiples to hint at the sheen of bronze, marble, or glass, to incarnate them somewhat sensuously so that they could be consumed, or they could consume themselves in their iterations. There is, therefore, tension to be discerned here between the dissipation of the body and the return to it through a form of facture that may even be belabored but so necessary in recovering it from the defiles of being a singular sensation. This liveliness in the register of Haraway is salient in the manner we crack the codes of the biopolitical language in the present: how, for instance,



BINABAWAL, BINABANAL NO. 1
Oil on canvasboard
37.2 x 60 centimeters (oval)
2011



BINABAWAL, BINABANAL NO. 2
Oil on canvasboard
37.2 x 60 centimeters (oval)
2011



BINABAWAL, BINABANAL NO. 3
Oil on canvasboard
37.2 x 60 centimeters (oval)
2011

the body severs itself for profit, rendering it incomplete, or how it extends itself and develops strange limbs or unforeseen maladies because it has become, at last, prosthetic, a nexus to technology, a cyborg, a wired, hyperlinked being.

The practice of Leo Abaya as production designer in cinema facilitates a translation of these unnerving thoughts into an exhibition. His attention to the nature of artifice, the illusion of props, the hints of costume clinging to flesh or adornment smearing the face, the “special effects” of graphics or animation – all this conjures a sensorium or a scenography in which live performers interact with light and lens and inanimate objects and nonhumans. In the realm of the senses of art, this stimulus returns to the artist and haunts his own things that attempt to critique the world of objects or the world that has become an object, objectified by bodily instincts, traded and disowned in art. ©

UNNERVING

by Patrick D. Flores

The current condition may be described in many ways. One could make the argument that everyday life is mediated in a sensate economy, or alternatively, it is sensitized by media, and in both cases, quite thoroughly. If in the modern era, dehumanization was the trope; in our time, it may well be corporealization, or the overinvestment in affect or affective labor that curiously is the lynchpin of reification, or the alienation from nature, the beginning of commodities as fetish. Here, the body ceases to be mere site of fragmentation; it is itself bare life, the sheer stuff that not only embodies but is embedded. The theorist Donna Haraway has a compelling way of putting this in her distinction between “life itself” and “liveliness”: “Life itself is the psychic, cognitive, and material terrain of fetishism. By contrast, liveliness is open to the possibility of situated knowledges.”¹ And to demonstrate how far this creeping enterprise has gone, she argues: “Ask any biodiversity lawyer whether genes are sources of ‘value’ these days, and the structure of commodity fetishism will come clear.”²

This exhibition of Leo Abaya converses with these anxieties: how sensing has been colonized not just in the sense of control or the (re)production of false consciousness, but the very making of bodies itself, the altering of the cellular and the nature/culture sequence, from the peddling of kidneys in the slums to the acquisition, then cultivation, of American accent in call centers by agents who have to rewind their body clocks to be able to interface with native English speakers elsewhere.

Endnotes

¹ Haraway, Donna. 1998. “Deanimations: Maps and Portraits of Life Itself.” *Picturing Science, Producing Art*. Eds. Caroline A. Jones and Peter Galison. New York: Routledge, p. 185.

² Haraway 1998, p. 183.