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26 April 2013

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JET PASCUA
RYAN VILLAMAEL
COSTANTINO ZICARELLI
I'relikt I
curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana
03 - 26 May 2013

opening reception:
03 May, Fri, 7-9pm
artist talk:
04 May, Sat, 3pm

I'relikt I

curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana

Jet Pascua | Ryan Villamael | Costantino Zicarelli



words by Cocoy Lumbao

The signs of the times are riddled with detours. The *shift* –from one iconic symbol to the next has become as rapid as the public’s clamor for download speed and as erratic as to how their message-carrying devices either rise to become fashionable or submit to obsolescence. The faces of politics and religion settle for stand-ins behind figures of power and spirituality, which the people themselves have chosen as avatars, evident in how one man’s silhouette can become more revealing than his actual portrait. In art and popular culture we have seen icons change from soup cans to sharks in formaldehyde to pictures sent via the *Instagram*, and how tastes in music have become as varied and changeable as a punk rock band’s chord progressions. And in as much as we have become accustomed to these shifts we might as well, in this age since Barthes made the argument, settle instead into a time of signs, more dynamic than ever and even more dominant, for long after they have dissolved past our view the song remains—that *they are a-changin*.’

In our present day and age, it appears that it is the signs and symbols that are thrust into perpetual motion, and it is we, who were supposed to weave our way through them that has been brought into a standstill, as spectators, as listeners. We have been led, into certain detours, and in dead ends. Once an iconic figure might find itself ablaze and burn its way into its own demise, while others endure, are re-fashioned, or leave trails like splashes in a lake or tracks in the dirt, and once the water becomes still and the dust settles we begin to dig and find what’s left out of an old picture, a familiar object or even a clichéd expression to re-examine: these are the reclaimed fossils of our existence.

“It’s not about the idea of sex, drugs and rock n’ roll or being a fan boy. I’m more interested in putting a less chaotic line between the subculture scene and the idea of using reality as fictional tools, or vice versa.”—Costantino Zicarelli, b.1984, Manila, Philippines.

The signs and symbols of myth, memory, and iconoclasm itself—embody the persistence of a mutable iconography in the works of **Costantino Zicarelli**, **Ryan Villamael**, and **Jet Pascua**, three Filipino artists represented by Silverlens Galleries who will be part of a show entitled **I'relikt I** at the space in Gillman Barracks, Singapore. Curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana, the show brings to our attention how these artists, who work in extremely varied forms, possess the tendencies to return to the emblematic, to the iconic, or, as Pastrana has observed, *‘to a system of iconographies that may be cultural, political, spiritual, or*

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otherwise. But in this *return* to what is iconic and to symbolisms, Pastrana also sees the strong display of what is unrecoverable, as our system of signs has become more dynamic and convoluted than ever. Such is the case, the show answers to the idea of a relict, of what has survived from the signs of our times. In **l'reliktl**, their union has supplied us with an archive of vestiges, of traces from what has vanished, from what remains, and what is conjured to make up for what is missing. These are demonstrated in works which are as varied as drawings, cut paper, video and found objects.

In Costantino Zicarelli's works, the formulaic expressions of sex, drugs, and rock and roll are appropriated—sourced out and manipulated, and are turned into monochromatic drawings using graphite on paper. Kurt Cobain in one of his most iconic poses, an array of heavy metal paraphernalia consisting of skulls, occult imagery of hypnotic patterns, and actual punk D.I.Y. concert posters and zines make up some of the elements which Zicarelli has used for their juxtapositions within the frame with the more banal—camp fire, swaying palm trees, the night sky. In Zicarelli's appropriation of such deviant, iconoclastic, or sometimes hackneyed imagery, which embodies a kind of fascination with specific, iconic images of his time, renders itself archaic, and becomes a model instead of the evasive nature of popular imagery into fine art, of lowbrow into high, of fantasy into reality, or vice-versa.

Zicarelli's art demonstrates a kind of resistance to the prevalence of the more deliberate composition in paintings, may it be figurative or abstract. His works reclusively tread at the edge of the *naïf* or the outsider's margins, and carries with them the strange credence of an occult, of a deep-seated veneration for a new-found religion. Within the system of signs and iconology, Zicarelli's images seem to portray idolatry more than anything else, a goat's head raised above its contemporaries. They materialize like vandals and graffiti, sudden and devious, like drawings in an armchair. But they blaze like dark renaissance, a subaltern homage to masterpieces of punk rock and grunge. Will these be the new frescos of saints for years to come?

***"What interests me is the idea that the more unrecognizable, alien, and cryptic images are, the more we venerate such formations. We become more attached to what is strange because we ourselves fill in the gaps, to make them more recognizable, to make present what is absent."*—Ryan Villamael, b.1987, Laguna, Philippines.**

Within the flat surface of cut paper, Ryan Villamael sees a parallel with the ancient symbols stretched miles across the land to depict a familiar form, a familiar yet slightly abstract shape, depicting animals and other organic forms which can only be seen from a bird's-eye view, believed to be the inner workings of aliens or gods. He imbues the same process, of carving out abstract shapes out of paper, then stretching them out to hopefully reveal a familiar entity. The outcome of his process always does reveal an insignia—an emblem, an organism, a strange yet familiar figure. He explains his fascination with holy apparitions and alien sightings, and his interest in how we put more meaning to what is unrecognizable to justify their existence.

In Ryan Villamael's work, which is a retreat to the craftier art of paper-cutting, the figures turn into a kind of symbol, a modern-day hieroglyphic of a complex narrative. It is a throwback on the traditions of how handcrafted designs once pervaded our ties with the spiritual and the mythical, represented in carved stones or woven patterns of ancient tribes, or even, to this modern day—the

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unexplained marks and signs of what can only be deemed as of alien source. Villamael places within his craft this twisted aspect of iconography: absent, inexistent, where our imaginations nevertheless function to add meaning and fill the gaps.

"[The] whole exhibition is about remembering and questioning what it is you remember and the idea of the palimpsest. It is about journeys and understanding places, people, events when you are no longer there or detached from it/them."—Jet Pascua, on his show, Dust Lines, in Oslo, Norway.

In a work entitled *Exclave*, Jet Pascua installs a paddle with images of buildings and house structures from the island of Melilla cut and carved into it, explaining that the work is inspired by a trip to the island of Gorée just off the coast of Dakar, Senegal and that Gorée was a known trading post during the slave trade era, and that the island of Melilla is an exclave of Spain and one of the destinations of illegal African immigrants wanting to enter Europe, while adding that the word exclave is, incidentally, also the French word for slave.

In another work done in Video, called *Ilisita Mo Na Lang sa Tubig (Just Write Them on the Water)*, he demonstrates a symbolic phrase and gesture inherent to the Filipino culture, where he re-fashions an old saying into the realm of physical action. As an ode to the sad turmoil that has been happening to his native land while he was away living in another country, Pascua's work presents an iconography that is more personal, more native to his experience as a migrant, as someone who can see the distance between journeys as the distance between our memories. His constructed objects pay homage to the gathering of artifacts from our experiences, from our memory, and what we recover from them after leaving.

His works, as well as Zicarelli's and Villamael's, are testaments to the different reconstructions of different iconographies: one that is borrowed, one that is imagined, and one which is recovered through memory; one which belongs to a specific culture, one which digresses to the mythical, while one which answers to a more personal account of experience. Are these mere exercises to define the persistence of recognizable symbols between artworks? It may, or may not be so. After all, these works, and arguably with other works of different artists working in the same manner, would have always started with an expression that needs to be released rather than with finding allusions. But however incidental the references to other symbols may be, undoubtedly, still, they will be thrown into that system of signs, and the rest of us will always look on as surveyors—to find what's left from our stay, to find clues from our existence, or to find something identifiable, and to seek probably meaning and direction.

I'relikt| with JET PASCUA, RYAN VILLAMAEL and COSTANTINO ZICARELLI runs from 03-26 May 2013 at Silverlens Gillman Barracks at 47 Malan Road, #01-25 Gillman Barracks, Singapore 109444. Opening reception for the artists and the curator will be from 7-9pm on 03 May, Friday. Artists and the curator will be present. An artist talk will be held on the next day, 04 May, Saturday, 3pm. Admission is free.

For inquiries please contact Neli Go, +65.9782.3013 or neli@silverlensgalleries.com.

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