

## Curatorial Statement

### *Retrospective Utopia*

Through different practices, the artists in show meet common ground in their aim to make up for a lost world, finding in art the most promising place to produce relationships between human existence and their melancholy for missing an authentic dimension.

The view of a Sumatran forest, a tiger surrounded by orchids, horses and lions in the sun, these are subjects of Yunizar`s large canvases and bronze sculptures; coming directly from the natural world that surrounds him, they become characters of his artistic imagery. Conceived from the holistic concept of "rasa" (the act of perceiving the whole at once, involving simultaneously feelings, emotions, sensations, perceptions and judgments), his works depict visions of a lost world, so natural and archetypal as to become mythological. Unaffected by any trend coming from contemporary society, Yunizar silently witnesses the transformation of Indonesian traditional culture, gradually eroded under the pressure of modernity, yet present contingencies can't override his own dimension.

While his art is self-sufficient, still it's not self-referred, on the contrary, it implies the interdependence between art and receiver. The absence of any sub-text allows the viewer to dive in the contemplation of the works, created to be felt rather than understood, and freely embrace the emotions arising from it. Closer to osmosis with things, he meets a perfect mimesis of art and life.

Inspired by Nature is his color palette: burnt Sienna, Ochre, Deep Green, Raw Umber, Beige, Black, Blue. His land`s shades remain dominant in Yunizar`s canvas, even when the compositions gradually shift toward more synthetic shapes, through a progressive rarefaction of the reality that leads to the abstract series of the "Coretan" (marks). Where the representation of Nature gives way to a reiteration of marks in form of letters and the skillful, albeit casual, organization of the canvas spaces resonates with loss and disappearance, embracing the void of the empty canvas.

Resort to Buddhism, is Sriwan`s way to cope with the nostalgia of a pure world, faded under her eyes; she thus incorporates in her art elements of religion and tradition, with an approach common to her fellow South East Asian artists. Meaningful are the titles of the works "Samsara B", "Samsara C", which refer to the Buddhist concept of the inexorable cycle of life, death and rebirth. Human figures and skeletons overlay, filling the entire field of the canvas, bodies and bones twist and overlap. The whirls of limbs, contorted in embraces, are claustrophobic, with bodies and bones piled on top of one another, wrapped in tangles of limbs, caught in the act of kissing. Her scenes suggest a sinister eroticism between men and dead, a continuum of life and afterlife. Bright colors with strong contrasts against dark backgrounds recall the artificial shades of the city night life, while the flatness of the pattern and two-dimensionality of the figures deprive the subjects of any materiality, giving to the bodies a symbolic function. A feeling of suffocation and malaise warns about the risk of losing the path traced by the Buddhist doctrine of Dharma, the only route that leads to a centered life, aligned with "cosmic law and order".

A dreamlike world of memories shelters Marin Cruz, softening the harshness of objective reality by transferring it in a suspended dimension. Cruz mother`s and aunt`s childhood clothes, uncovered from a home closet, are the subject of her artworks over the years. Sewn out of recycled fabric by her grandmother, a strong and vital woman, the textiles are hints of a family line that passed from woman to woman. Epiphanies of an intimate still archetypal narrative, Cruz works are realistic representations of garments or magnified details of their fabric. Reported meticulously on canvas: dots, lace patterns, strips, even stains, threadbare hems and discolorations, emphasize the formal aspect of the work, which intensified in the close-up series, nearing abstraction.

Even though the memories she evokes are unknown to her, still she needs to preserve that world from the risk of being erased, keeping alive the possibility to dig deeper into her own psychological dimension, evoking dreams, childhood memories and reassuring feelings.

Similarly, the element of time is preponderant in Gongkan paintings: surrealistic canvas, populated by human figures, realized with a graphic flat stroke, and caught in interactions or in lonely poses. Although his soft color palette and the fluidity of the shapes hint a feeling of serenity, the peace emerging from his canvas is often blurred by the intensity of black shapes. A “black sun” or a “black hole”, often breaks the static of his paintings and trouble the peacefulness of the scene. The “black hole”, a subject he has worked intensively to, represents the surreal tool his characters use to teleport themselves. Metaphor for “transformation” and “solution”, it symbolizes the possibility to picture oneself differently, assigning to reality alternative interpretations, different visions of the present time, as well as rewriting the past. Past, present and future may seem like different worlds, yet for Gongkan, seeking to analyze Being within its temporal context, the three dimensions are intimately intertwined.

Darker is the message in his latest works, where the “black sun” takes the place of the “black hole”, representing in images the darkening our society recently underwent to.

Negation, religion, memory, disconnection: different ways to adjust to an asynchronous society, united by the implied action of detachment. For Kristoffer Ardena instead “criticism” does not necessarily imply moving apart. If the right statement “all art is political” applies to both: artists who take action and those who don't, Ardena`s commitment is more than action, it`s intrinsic to reality, being reality both object and subject of his art.

Not only society is the focus of his speculation, physical fragments of daily life are material of his works. “Ghost Painting”, the series that Ardena has been working on since three years, includes large abstract paintings made out of ordinary materials. Tarpaulin, fabric, retaso rugs, sourced from ordinary Filipino household, are weaved together in a blend of bright colors; the abstract surface is then cracked and allows a glimpse of the underneath background, showing the presence of almost unperceivable figures: scenes caught from commercials or politician propaganda posters.

The ephemerality of the substances, and their almost unpredictable reactions, intitle the material with a demiurgic function. In the randomness of their effects, lies the outcome of the creative process. While the artist is not in full control of the final result, the material is empowered with the action to forge the work. Thus, not only the essence of the material but also its function is emphasized, denying the assumption that consider artwork as only generated within noble contexts and, instead, showing an art that feeds on everyday stories. His art has a life of its own, it shows and reflects society, rather than imitating it. Not escaping reality, Ardena`s art becomes a presence.

Curator: Michela Sena