

STang Contemporary Art is proud to present

Myths and Truths: Recent Work by Rodel Tapaya

Curated by Matthias Arndt

2018.11.3-12.15

Tang Contemporary Art 2nd Gallery Space

Tang Contemporary Art is proud to announce the opening of *Myths and Truths: Recent Work by Rodel Tapaya* on November 3, 2018, in the 2nd space of Beijing. Curated by Matthias Arndt, this exhibition will present a range of monumentally scaled paintings alongside medium scale works, an installation piece and film.

Born 1980, Rodel Tapaya lives and works in Bulacan, Philippines and is considered one of the most important Filipino painters of his generation and one of the most active artists working in Southeast Asia today. In his work, he conveys important stories of his country, the people and topical local societal issues from the Philippines that intertwine traditional storytelling within a contemporary context. As all great storytellers do, he draws connections between the imagined and the real, history and the present day, and myth and current events. As a figurative painter, Tapaya's intriguing literary-based compositions transcend beyond their local context to universal situations and are reminiscent in style to painters from the German Expressionist tradition such as Neo Rauch, Max Beckmann, as well as finding parallels in the painterly developments of artists such as Daniel Richter and Peter Doig, among others.

Utilising a range of media — from large acrylic on canvasses to an exploration of under-glass painting, traditional crafts, diorama, and drawing — Tapaya filters his observations of the world through folktales and pre-colonial historical research, creating whimsical montages of his characters. Each work has its origin in Tapaya's reflections on a particular time or place that possesses an enduring resonance, from its correspondence with the formalistic and psychological implication of the grid in his earlier works to protracted ventures which excavate and interpret myth and folk aesthetics.

Speaking about the symbolism in Tapaya's work and further associations, Jaklyn Babington (Senior Curator, Contemporary Arts Practice – Global, National Gallery of Australia) comments “by drawing inspiration from pre-colonial mythology and Filipino folkloric tradition, Tapaya meticulously pieces together numerous pictorial fragments, fusing the otherworldly with the real, in a visual grappling with contemporary politics, social and environmental issues. Tapaya has been exhibiting for over a decade and has established an intriguing literary-based visual practice, unique in its Filipino perspective yet striking for its participation in the rich history of Hispanic narrative painting. His flat application of paint, cramped figurative compositions and mix of decorative surface with political messaging immediately evokes the work of the Mexican muralists and surrealists such as José Clemente Orozco, Diego Rivera, David Alfaro Siqueiros and Frida Kahlo. However, in a constructed knotting of the social, political and environmental issues of Filipino life, Tapaya's work illuminates a complicated contemporary existence. And, as with the great social narrative painters before him, the local issues grappled with are often of global significance.”

This exhibition is about the exploration of the dichotomy between scientific truths and the rich mythical stories from my country, The Philippines. French anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss, founder of Structural Anthropology once said, “*I therefore claim to show, not how men think in myths, but how myths operates in men's minds without their being aware of the fact.*” As Levi-Strauss believed that myths are not simply a random construction of primitive beliefs or backward mentality instead myths are pseudo-histories, the artist speaks about his solo project:

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They provide the raw material for a systematic analysis of how humans unconscious mind works. “In this new body of work, I have created forests, mountains and landscapes, familiar yet otherworldly. The elements in the myths are juxtaposed with present conditions prevailing in contemporary society. As humans we tend to see ourselves as giants and gods that can control nature but in the process creating our own ‘earthquakes’ and disasters. It is interesting for me to find connections and relations of myths and the present stories on ecological perspectives, combined with the consequences of humans insatiable desires resulting to man-made disasters.”

About the artist

Rodel Tapaya born in 1980. He completed his studies at the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts. He awarded the coveted Grand Prize in the Nokia Art Awards in 2001, which allowed him to pursue intensive drawing and painting courses at Parsons School of Design in New York and the University of Helsinki in Finland.

Selected solo exhibitions include: Urban Labyrinth, Ayala Museum, Manila, Philippines (2018), Rodel Tapaya. New Art from the Philippines, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia (2017), Rodel Tapaya, Galerie der Stadt Sindelfingen, Germany (2016), "ICA Off-Site: Hong Kongese" (2015), curated by Gregor Muir, Alia Al-Senussi and Abdullah AlTurki at Duddell's Hong Kong, "Bato-Balani" at the Ateneo Art Gallery, Quezon City, Philippines (2014), "Cloudland" at the Art Hongkong, Hong Kong (2012), "Prism and Parallelism" at the BENCAB Museum, Baguio City, Philippines (2012), "Flowers of the Tongue" at the Vargas Museum, UP Campus Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines (2010) and "Mythical Roots" at the SOKA ART Center, Beijing (2009).

Selected group exhibitions include: 15th Asia Arts Festival, Ningbo Museum of Art, Ningbo, China, Terra Incognita, Hilger BrotKunsthalle Vienna, Austria, Passion and procession. Art of the Philippines, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, Pinto: Manhattan Manila, West Village, NYC, USA, 20th Biennale of Sydney, Sydney, Australia (2016), "June a Painting Show, Sadie Coles HQ, London, UK (2015), Bisa: Potent Presences at the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Philippines (2011) and Thrice Upon a Time: A Century of Story in the Art of the Philippines at the Singapore Art Museum, Singapore (2009).

His work is held in the following international museum collections: Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Australia, Mori Art Museum Collection, Tokyo, Japan, The Hori Science and Art Foundation, Nagoya, Japan, SAM - Singapore Art Museum, Singapore, Bencab Museum Collection, Benguet, Philippines, Ateneo Art Gallery Collection, Manila, Philippines, Pinto Art Museum, Philippines, Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (Central Bank of the Philippines).

About the curator

Born in 1968, in Frankfurt, Germany, Matthias Arndt is a contemporary art expert and advisor who ran his successful gallery business in Berlin with branches in Zurich, New York and Singapore. Spanning twenty-three years of operation, Arndt's contemporary art galleries staged over 300 exhibitions worldwide, were represented in all major international art fairs, and published 80 artist monographs, catalogue raisonnés, gallery magazines and thematic publications in collaboration with major international publishing houses and editors. Matthias Arndt is the founder and managing director of A3 - Arndt Art Agency.

Matthias Arndt was also Director of the guided tours and visitor services of DOCUMENTA X (1997) and created a dynamic arts management firm, artservices, consulting with clients such as Volkswagen, Expo 2000, Berlin Biennale, Haus der Kulturen, and co-founded "Kunstherbst Berlin" (today's Berlin Art Week). Arndt has lectured at the Institute of Culture and Media Management at the Berlin University, at Documenta IX and X in Kassel, the UBS Arts Forum in Wolfsburg and LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. He is a member of the Asia Pacific Acquisition Committee of the TATE in London and was awarded Knight of the French "Ordre des Arts et des Lettres" in 2002 by the French Ministry of Culture. Arndt is also the Chair of the BERLIN MASTERS Foundation, a charitable foundation to support artists based in Berlin.

Tang Contemporary Art

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Please contact the gallery in advance to arrange an interview.