

Tang Contemporary Art presents:

## RETROSPECTIVE UTOPIA

Artists: Yunizar, Marina Cruz, Sriwan Janehuttakarnkit, Kristoffer Ardena, Gongkan

Curator: Michela Sena

Exhibition Dates: 24 Sep - 20 Oct 2020

Venue: Tang Contemporary Art Bangkok

Opening Reception: 24 September at 4:00PM

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Tang Contemporary Art is proud to announce the opening of "Retrospective Utopia," a group exhibition featuring the works of acclaimed Southeast Asian artists: Yunizar, Marina Cruz, Sriwan Janehuttakarnkit, Kristoffer Ardena and Gongkan. Curated by Michela Sena, the exhibition will be on view at Tang Contemporary Art Bangkok from 24 September - 20 October 2020.

The exhibition evokes the nostalgia of a past era, in which the world was more in sync with nature. Through different techniques and various perspectives, the artists reconstruct this lost world, using art, the most honest way to express, to explore the relationships between humans and their natural existence - their connection to nature and the authentic world.

Indonesian artist, Yunizar, is inspired by the natural world that surrounds him. The view of a Sumatran forest, a tiger surrounded by orchids, horses and lions in the sun, are the subjects of the artist's large canvases and bronze sculptures. Conceived from the holistic concept of "rasa" (the act of perceiving the whole at once), his works depict visions of a lost world, mythological yet natural and believable. Unaffected by trends continuously emerging from contemporary society, Yunizar silently witnesses the transformation of Indonesian traditional culture. Traditions gradually erode under the pressures of modernity, yet these present circumstances are not able to override the artist's vision and beliefs.

Thai artist, Sriwan, copes with the nostalgia of a pure world by incorporating art elements of religion and tradition. Her works, "Samsara B" and "Samsara C" are especially meaningful as they refer to the Buddhist concept of an inexorable cycle of life, death and rebirth. Human figures and skeletons overlay in the painting, with bodies and bones twisting and overlapping to fill the entire canvas. The colorful scenes portrayed, suggest a sinister eroticism between men and the dead, a continuum of life and afterlife. Emerging from her canvas is a feeling of suffocation and malaise, which warns us about the risk of falling off 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 Filipina artist, Marina Cruz. The artist softens the harshness of the objective reality by transferring it into a suspended dimension. Cruz's mother's and aunt's childhood clothes, uncovered from a home closet, are the subjects of her artworks over the years. The works are realistic representations of garments or magnified details of their fabric. Even though the memories evoked through these belongings are not hers, the artist needs to preserve these memories and prevent that world from being erased - keeping alive the possibility to dig deeper into her childhood and dreams to further explore her roots, past, and psychological dimension.

The element of time is also predominant in Thai artist, Gongkan's paintings: surrealistic canvas, populated by human figures, realized with graphic flat strokes. The peace emerging from his canvas is often blurred by the intensity of black shapes, such as a "black sun" or a "black hole". As a metaphor for "transformation" and "solution", the black hole symbolizes the possibility to picture oneself differently. Through presenting different visions of the present times or rewriting the past, the artist creates alternate realities in the process. Past, present and future may seem like different worlds, yet for Gongkan, they are intimately intertwined. "Darkness" is also a message conveyed in his more recent works, where the "black sun" takes the place of the "black hole", illustrating the darkness that our society is experiencing through imagery.

Negation, religion, memory, disconnection are all different ways to adjust to an asynchronous society. For Filipino artist, Kristoffer Ardena, not only is society the focus of his speculation, but physical fragments of daily life are also material of his works. "Ghost Painting" is a series the artist has been working on for the past three years; the works are large abstract paintings made out of everyday materials, sourced from any ordinary Filipino household. The ephemerality of substances, their often unpredictable reactions, or the randomness of their effects are all a part of the artist's creative process. The artist is not in full control of the final result, and the probability of the outcome is also a part of the process. The essence of the material and also its function are emphasized, showing that artworks are not always created under advantageous or perfect circumstances, but can be a result of everyday life and stories.

## About the Curator

Michela Sena is an art historian, who received her Master's Degree in Art History from Roma Tres University. In 2003, Michela Sena began working at the Modern and Contemporary Art Gallery of Rome (Francesco Crispi), dating and cataloguing Italian artworks from 1850 to 1970. She later moved to Milan to work at Acacia, an Italian art collectors' association, and in 2005, she curated her first art exhibition, "The Thin Line", for a contemporary art nonprofit space, Viafarini. In 2007, Michela Sena moved to Shanghai where she worked as editor for the art magazine, *Visual Production*, and later became director of Primo Marella Gallery Beijing in 2008.

Since 2013, she has been consulting for Chinese investment funds on western post-war art masterpieces, until joining Tang Contemporary Art as director of Tang Contemporary Art Bangkok. She is now an independent curator and researcher with focuses on semiotics and art languages.

## Tang Contemporary Art

Tang Contemporary Art was established in 1997 in Bangkok, later establishing galleries in Beijing and Hong Kong. Tang Contemporary Art is fully committed to producing critical projects and exhibitions to promote Contemporary Chinese art regionally and worldwide, and encourage a dynamic exchange between Chinese artists and those abroad.

Acting as one of the most progressive and critically driven exhibition spaces in China, the gallery strives to initiate dialogue between artists, curators, collectors and institutions working both locally and internationally. A roster of groundbreaking exhibitions has earned Tang Contemporary Art internationally renowned recognition, establishing its status as a pioneer of the contemporary art scene in Asia.

Tang Contemporary Art represents leading figures in Chinese art including Ai Weiwei, Huang Yongping, Shen Yuan, Wang Du, Liu Xiaodong, Yang Jiechang, Xia Xiaowan, Sun Yuan & Peng Yu, Yan Lei, Wang Yin, Wang Yuping, Yangjiang Group, Guo Wei, Zheng Guogu, Lin Yilin, He An, Zhao Zhao, Wang Yuyang, Weng Fen, Yang Yong, Xu Qu, Xu Xiaoguo, Ji Zhou, Cai Lei, Ling Jian, Liu Yujia, Zhu Jinshi, Qin Qi, Chen Yujun, Chen Yufan and Chen Wenbo, and collaborating with international artists such as H.H.Lim, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Sakarin Krue-On, Michelangelo Pistoletto, Adel Abdessemed, Dinh Q.Le, Michael Zelehoski, Jennifer Wen Ma, Rodel Tapaya, Natee Utarit and Heri Dono.

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