

Sacred Devotions, a series reworked from his *Private Altars* (2003) commissioned for the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum. What the viewer starts to take on board are collected narratives, regurgitated and boxed up in the genre of American Joseph Cornell assemblages. This trilogy of exhibitions across three countries is clearly an aggregated visual vocabulary where Roldan plays off local context and the ability of visual symbols to communicate collective belief in the 'unbelievable.'

The box or grid is a common thread throughout this survey exhibition and indeed Roldan's career. Our human compulsion to collect, order, file, locate culturally, digest, and assimilate visual iconography is an interesting one when overlaid with the semiotics of 'a frame' that is pigeonholed, quarantined, or, to use Roldan's word, rendered "sacred." It moves well beyond the realm of religion, popular culture, or identity politics and this exhibition attempts to throw up those ambiguities.

Take Roldan's *Sacred Devotions* (2009) that use the intimate space of the domestic shrine, characterized by their 'wallpapered' backgrounds. They are akin to Chinese ancestral altars wrapped in superstitions and respect with their offerings of coca-cola or liquor and yet these assemblages offer

a kind of moral lessons for the modern couple, observed in the rare tin box of 'President Ferdinand E. Marcos Rural Medical Program Barrio Captain Health Kit.' It is paraphernalia at its richest and most layered.

In the same way, Roldan manipulates the object's origin in a new series for this tour, *We have nothing that is ours except time and memory* (2009), calling on the use of found photography, recompositing history away from sentimentality through repetition. I find it an important conduit across Roldan's career linking his more conceptual installations and painted works. The photograph acts as a linchpin to these two disparate edges of Roldan's practice.

Spatially this exhibition is visually frenetic but clean, superbly hung in each of its venues. Perhaps that is largely due to the technical precision in the fabrication of these works. It returns me to the centerpiece assemblage, *Rix Salvo Rix* and the way it blatantly works against that deliberate order by scarring the surface with splattered wax. Sewing and piercing this sacred cloth attaching amulets, this piece is the pinnacle at which two ideologies collide. Perhaps the text is a hint, a bastardization of Latin fusing Catholicism with animism.

At the end of the day we are left with a unique and deeply personal language built

upon memory, [dis]association, and consideration. Is it sacred? Is it profane? The answer, like Roldan's work itself, offers a jar between states of thought colored with the patina of global culture and Filipino kitsch. This exhibition is as seductive as its source and is a superb embodiment of Roldan's career.

Gina Fairley

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THAILAND

Bangkok

Wantanee Siripattananuntakul at Ardel Gallery of Modern Art

Wantanee Siripattananuntakul was one of five artists chosen to collaborate on the ironic *faux* tourism campaign for the Thai Pavilion at the 53rd *Venice Biennale*. Under the playful marketing name *Gondola al Paradiso*, each of the participating artists subverted stereotypical notions of 'Thainess' by delivering their own interpretation of the nation's self-perpetuating image as an exotic destination of packaged indulgencies.

For her part, Siripattananuntakul created mock advertorial posters featuring

the image of a traditionally garbed Thai classical dancer with a long, protruding nose, a parody on the idealized images of Thailand promoted by state tourism agencies. Whimsically titled *Wantanocchio*, the miniature fiberglass model with the artist's face and elongated Pinocchio snout was a tongue-in-cheek indicator of Siripattananuntakul's falsified credentials and invented critical exaltations that are an integral feature to her *oeuvre*.

Siripattananuntakul extends the Pinocchio analogies further in *90' toboibconataW* at Bangkok's Ardel Gallery. Her first solo exhibition since the *Biennale*, the witty conceptually driven display comprised a slightly smaller-than-life hyper-real resin sculpture of the artist sitting in a traditional Thai pose, wearing the ornamental head-dress known as *jada*.

In contrast to the traditional formality of the pose and regalia, the glib-looking self-portrait wears casual contemporary jeans and a T-shirt printed with the slogans "Born to be famous" and "The artist who is the best liar." The mocking texts are blatant signals of the artist's intentions in her attempts to expose and subvert the role of ego in art's methodology. In a society that places great emphasis on respecting the hierarchy, her art has an element of antiestablishment disregard to it.

A mechanized interactive continuum of the Pinocchio theme is the automated retracting and extending nose that is triggered when viewers walk in front of the sculpture. Bringing the public further into the installation while also heightening the artist's themes of the construction and the ephemerality of fame. A wall-mounted television monitor also screens the audience as it stands in front of the model.

The exhibition is completed by a number of mythic wall-posted reviews about the artist's life and work. Citing several internet and journal sources including *Flash Art*, *Tate Modern*, *Time Out*, and *Art Review*, the constructed texts are appropriated and adjusted



Norberto Roldan, *Rix Salvo Rix*, 2009, assemblage, collage, and construction with found objects, 243 x 609 cm. Installation view at MO_Space, Manila. Photograph by Gina Fairley.

from writings on the art world's current elite, such as Rirkirt Tiravanija and Erwin Wurm.

Despite the falsities of her reviews and commentaries, she includes pertinent statements on the positioning of many Asian artists today. Revealing statements include "Siripattananuntakul delivers works that exploit Europeans' and Americans' curiosity in the quirky qualities of things new and Thai" and "In analogy with the world of consumerism, a very important role is played by exotics."

Siripattananuntakul's provocative exhibition highlights how artists harness cultural idiosyncrasies to create greater interest, as well as the increased capability to construct personal and public mythologies through new media forums of the Internet and reality television.

Steven Pettifor

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Zeitgeist Becomes Form: German Fashion Photography 1945-1995 at Bangkok University Gallery

Having been on the road for over a decade now, this traveling exhibition is a revealing, if not particularly new, survey of European fashion and photographic trends in the latter half of the 20th century.

The first comprehensive documentation of German fashion, this photographic exhibition reflects on the altering perceptions of women, and to a lesser extent men, in the consumer-driven decades after World War Two. It also provides fascinating insights into the inseparable relationship between fashion and photography and its impositions on society.

Laced with a certain measure of humor and irony, the photographs provide a barometer to ever-changing attitudes and standards of beauty. Reflecting the growing internationalization of fashion from the 1960s onward, it catalogues the transition from *haute couture* to *prêt-à-porter* (ready to



Wantanee Siripattananuntakul at Ardel Gallery, interactive installation.

wear), the increase in erotically loaded imagery, as well as the emergence of super-models in the 1980s and 1990s.

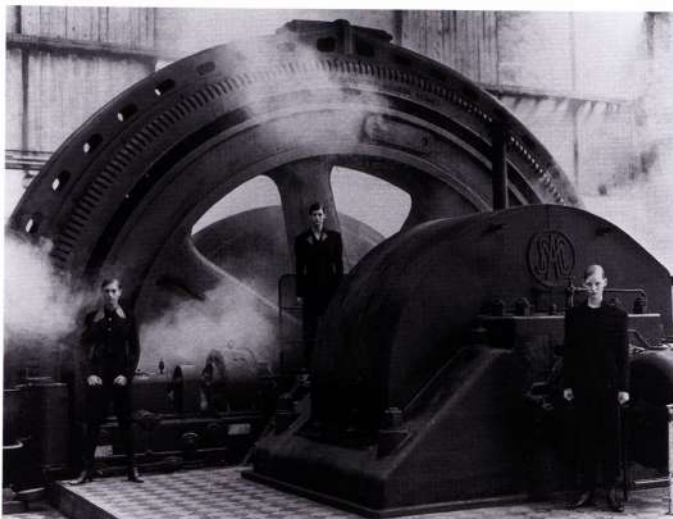
Presenting a curious and engaging glimpse of German history through the lens of fashion photography, the exhibition moves from the late 1940s, a time when Berliners were scrambling to survive in a ruined city in the turbulent aftermath of World War Two, to the euphoric fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and subsequent German reunification in 1990.

The exhibition features some 188 prints by some 39 influential photographers. It also unravels the individual

style and loaded imagery of each photographer, from the more aesthetically driven compositions of Heribert Brehm and Jo van der Berg to Horst Wackerbarth's provocative, sexually charged photographs from the early 1990s.

There is a certain optimism to the early images: evidence of industrial recovery can be seen in the model against a car factory backdrop in Norbert Leonard's 1953 print *Elegant next to the Volant* and the new VW Beetle—the "people's car"—appears in prints by Charlotte Rohrbach and Hubs Flöter.

Aside from German



Peter Lindbergh, Michaela Bercu, Linda Evangelista, and Kirsten Owen, photograph, 1988.

photographers, the exhibition also includes international photographers who have worked in Germany. An early indicator to the hedonistic, youth-focused 1960s, American Will McBride's photographs taken in the late 1950s show the emergence of sub-culture groups like the British MODS.

In Christian von Alvensleben's photograph *Ibiza* (1972) naked Rubenesque female poses on the beach, subverting perceptions of body idealization that are still an issue some three decades later.

There is a shift in the personification of the female image from a more maternal figure of the 1940s and 1950s to the more assertive independent female of the 1980s and 1990s. Primarily focusing on staged photographs with their models, other notable images include Peter Lindbergh's 1988 black-and-white photographs of international supermodels posing within post-industrial landscapes, reenforcing the idea of fashion as industry.

Concluding with the 1980s and 1990s, the photographs become increasingly provocative in subject matter, blurring lines between fashion and fine art photography. This is evident in the iconic image *Lutz & Alex Holding Cock* (1992) by Wolfgang Tillmans, a photographer who has successfully moved between fashion photography and visual art, and who became the first photographer to win the prestigious Turner Prize.

Steven Pettifor

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Stories from Her at DOB Hualamphong

Since the 1970s, little headway has been made in Thailand on redressing the weight of male superiority in this conservative nation. Even in the supposedly conscientious art community, there are still only a handful of internationally prolific female artists, with Araya Rasdajarmrearnsook and Pinaree Sanpitak the two most recognized among audiences abroad.