

# In the Event There is An Image: Realism and the Everyday

The many ways to capture the everyday has reached an unprecedented conceivability. Through image-making alone, their iterations have become more complex, in exploring the many possibilities that have developed from both concept and form. What is real? Or more importantly, how are the images of the day consumed and conceived? In the Philippines alone, the daily course of events has become more unhinged than ever, crisis after crises, strife after strife.

The everyday becomes a constant attempt to re-interpret what matters. In art, it has become a persistent engagement along the crossroads of illusion and truth, of perception and fact.

In the group exhibition, *In the Event There is An Image: Realism and the Everyday*, nine Filipino artists attempt to advance the tradition of realism that has come out from the region. Showing a wide range of approaches and artistic concerns, the resulting ensemble illuminates a mixture of possibilities in deciphering what is real. These are combinations of objects, paintings, photographs, prints, and mixed media that border more on conceptual and philosophical takes in addressing notions of reality, going beyond illusion and entering real space. The exhibition features works that depict our current reality as how we perceive it—representing the mundane, and presenting each artist's take on, as Patina Lee writes, "*the uncanny feeling of seeing the familiar, in an unfamiliar context.*"

Annie Cabigting's iconic depictions of viewers looking at other masterpieces, clues us into this growing complexity of realism that is further contextualised—here, the concept of 'painting' becomes front and center within the nuances of perceiving art itself. Pope Bacay's work, on the other hand, suggests to us a hidden reality, beyond painting itself, when he chose to paint, in remarkable detail, a window as it appears from the outside. In Jan Balquin's work, which is also a painting, our attention is redirected to the image's actual stature within the scheme of the everyday—a private possession. Similar to Nona Garcia's rendition of 'fool's gold,' which is painted on cement, allows us to contemplate on the hard fact that everything might just be mere illusion.

Gregory Halili's illusion, on the other hand, is somewhat disguised in nature. With his signature oil paintings of human skulls on shells, he ponders on the uncanny and extraordinary resemblance of actual—and natural objects—as reflections to our own existence. Speaking of objects, the mundane and ordinary find extraordinary transformations in Raena Abella's prints using a foregone photographic process achieved via exposing hand-coated sheets of glass against an old wooden camera. Ayka Go's object transformations on the other hand is stripped down into its most basic, yet volatile state: the crumpled piece of paper, treated as sculpture—it is an object to which one might refer to as the building block for all imaginations.

Meanwhile, both Jose Santos III and Nilo Ilarde's works bring us back to the meditation of the real. The former, with a view of the sky—the esoteric, as part of the everyday; while the latter, a cast of a pair of discarded paint brushes, reflect on the idea and death of painting itself—on whether it can face its own reality, its own end.

From the countless ways reality can either be perceived or consumed, the challenge has always been, since ancient times, how to interpret it. And since then, it has become an invaluable preoccupation for humanity where art, philosophy, and ideology can all merge together. *In the Event There is An Image: Realism and the Everyday*, revisits this preoccupation through the works of Filipino contemporary artists. It carries with it the art works and notion: that if reality presents itself in the mundanity of the everyday, then it is the best moment to find an image for truth. It is where the uneventful becomes an image; and where the image becomes the event.

Words by Cocoy Lumbao Jr.