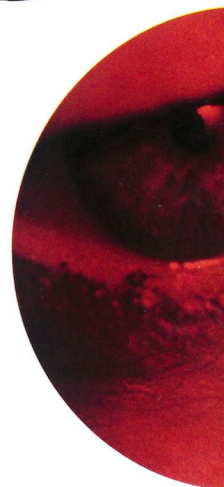
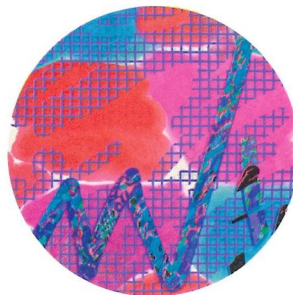


ARTFORUM

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I N T E R N A T I O N A L

BEST OF



NEWPORT BEACH, CA

2013 California-Pacific Triennial

ORANGE COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART

Curators of recurring contemporary survey exhibitions face a perpetual dilemma: How does one fend off biennial ennui? This was clearly the impetus for Dan Cameron's retooling of the Orange County Museum of Art's former California Biennial, which had been a state-bound overview with an emphasis on emerging artists. Working in a crowded field that now includes the Hammer Museum's "Made in L.A." biennial, as well as the J. Paul Getty Museum's "Pacific Standard Time" initiative, Cameron carved out a new mandate for OCMA, mounting a show that argues for California as a place embedded along the Pacific Rim. The inaugural edition of the show, redefined and renamed the California-Pacific Triennial, encompassed an impressive number of countries lining the world's largest ocean, with Japan, South Korea, China, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, Australia, Chile, Peru, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, the United States, and Canada all represented.

In its new guise, the exhibition could easily have been yet another free-ranging international survey. But Cameron makes a strong case in his catalogue essay for California's particular local-global identity in relation to Asia and Latin America. As he points out, the trading of goods and culture across the Pacific has a history tracing back several centuries, and California's demographics alone bear witness to the interrelation of these regions. (According to the 2010 census, Asians and Latinos together now account for more than half of California's population.) The test, of course, is whether the art in the exhibition coheres according to this geographic logic. And indeed, the triennial did possess a consistent tenor, one marked by earnest statements, both poetic and assertive—a double-edged tone that could well be the result of gathering artworks from territories still in global ascendance. In the maps drawn by Vietnamese artist Tiffany Chung, for example, the careful delicacy of her mark-making is countered by the sharp commentary implicit in the scenarios depicted,

Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook, *Two Planets: Millet's The Gleaners and the Thai Farmers*, 2008, video, color, sound, 15 minutes. Production still. From the 2013 California-Pacific Triennial.



as in *Iraqi State Railways After Anglo-Iraqi Treaty 1903 & Current Pipelines*, 2010. If the triennial had one dominant theme, however, it was what one might call the emotional intelligence of objects. Standouts in this regard were Gabriel de la Mora's *Altamirano 20 I* and *Altamirano 20 III*, both 2012, large-scale works consisting of the cracked and peeling canvas-backed ceilings removed from two Mexico City apartment buildings. The works' tenuous beauty, born of time and deterioration, serves as a reminder of the everyday lives in which their materials played a part.

Appropriately for a show predicated on cultural exchange, a number of pieces dealt with themes of translation and interpretation, such as Araya Rasdjarmrearnsook's 2008 video of Thai farmers discussing Jean-François Millet's 1857 *The Gleaners*. The most humorous work in this vein, Kim Beom's *Yellow Scream*, 2012, offered the Korean artist's take on the touchy-feely painting instruction of TV-show host Bob Ross. Like Ross, the painter in Kim's video (played by an actor) calmly talks the viewer through the steps of making an artwork. But when applying each brushstroke, he unleashes a ferocious scream, as if releasing a wellspring of pent-up aggression.

If a single work from the triennial might be said to have been representative of the whole, it would be Australian-born Shaun Gladwell's *Broken Dance (Beatboxed)*, 2012. In this video installation, two projections face each other from opposite sides of the room, one screen showing a person beat-boxing into a microphone in an empty studio, and the other showing a person freestyle dancing to that beat in a vacant urban space. On the one hand, each performer (in all, two beat boxers and three dancers) gives a solo performance, which spotlights the individual nature of improvisation. Yet in Gladwell's installation, the videos play off each other in a two-way conversation, and the result is surprisingly harmonic. One could say the same about the works in the exhibition: Though made at different points across the Pacific, they engage in subtle dialogues that come to light only when brought together.

—Jennifer King