

Haiku Reviews: Shakespeare, Abstraction and Pacific Standard Time (PHOTOS)

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Ronald Ventura works in his native Philippines, but his extravagant, superbly crafted confluences of expressionism, surrealism, and pop, riven with social commentary as appropriate to first world as to third, mark his ambitions as international. In this regard he is typical of Southeast Asia's best artists, able to fuse western art history, native traditions, and the excesses of contemporary visual culture, especially as those excesses play out on the streets of newly emergent metropoli. Indeed, Ventura's painting, with its mash-up of socially and sexually provocative imagery and graffiti-like writing, seems at worst like tidied-up street art. But in fact, all street art aspires to graphic cohesion, which, despite the profusion of references, is what Ventura is able to achieve. His three-dimensional works are less so visually arresting, but they may be conceptually more engaging, proposing peculiar "floating islands," right out of Jonathan Swift's Laputa, on which unlikely events transpire in even less likely neighborhoods. (Tyler Rollins, 529 West 20th St. #10W, NY; thru Oct. 22. www.trfineart.com)

- Peter Frank

RONALD VENTURA, *Astroland*, 2011, Oil on canvas, 72 x 60 inches