



WILD THING

Natural Highness (2015),
graphite and oil on canvas,
by celebrated international
artist Ronald Ventura

For this month, we are excited to present our “Best of the Best” (page 150) series, this time involving design and incorporating not only local but international talents as well. We also have an interview with Ronald Ventura, one of the most sought-after Filipino artists. My good friend Tyler Rollins, who owns Tyler Rollins Fine Art in New York, says of the celebrated artist: “He is without doubt one of the most highly acclaimed Filipino artists of his generation, with an incredibly dynamic range of work that has resonated not only throughout Asia but really across the world. Since 2009, he has presented three solo exhibitions with me here in New York, which is probably the most demanding art centre in the world. Each show has been a conceptually strong, thematically coherent body of artworks that, while often grounded in particular aspects of Filipino culture, have a universal relevance and appeal. His incredible talent and seemingly boundless creativity have attracted a global collector base, something that’s not easy to achieve.” Ventura is truly a legend in the making.

We also have an amazing feature written by Stephen Short on the collaboration between Rem Koolhaas and Prada to create the Fondazione Prada, an institution (or a mini-city) in Milan dedicated to art and culture. Although the Fondazione was founded in 1995, the new event space designed by Koolhaas unveiled its new permanent venue in May of this year. Another worthy read by Short is the piece on the new Bottega Veneta home furnishing showroom in Milan.

In Fashion we have photo shoots that take us to Dubai, London, and back to Manila. We also have an interview with celebrated author Kevin Kwan, who is coming to Manila this month to launch his second book. If you are a fan of his first book, *Crazy Rich Asians*, which we hear might be made into a Hollywood movie soon, you are sure to love *China Rich Girlfriend*.

On a last note, it’s our anniversary next month and we are turning 14. What we have in store for you will surely be as loud as a lion’s roar!

—ANTON SAN DIEGO
Editor-in-Chief

TIME OUT



Wouldn’t this Tudor Heritage Black Bay look good on my (or any man’s) wrist? It’s classic, bold and true to its vintage spirit. The watch is inspired by a diving model that first appeared in 1954 yet still retains its modern and contemporary look.

Roar!

OUR FIRST-EVER DESIGN ISSUE STARTS off with two gentlemen whose talent and creativity know no bounds. It was 13 years ago when interior designer Budji Layug and architect Royal Pineda partnered to form their own firm, BUDJI+ROYAL Architecture+Design. In “It Takes Two” (page 168), our Features Editor Cristina Morales interviews the dynamic and creative tandem whose contributions to Filipino design and architecture have been so significant that they were approached by the government to lend their talents to the country. Together with industrial designer Kenneth Cobonpue, Layug and Pineda have drawn up plans to transform the Ninoy Aquino International Airport into a better reflection of our society—something very modern, but still very Filipino. With them at the helm, our tagline of having one of the world’s worst airports should be a thing of the past.



TAKING FLIGHT
Ronald Ventura
(opposite) Wings,
193x162.5cm,
graphite and oil
on canvas

THE ART PROVOCATEUR

Philippine Tatler speaks with
Ronald Ventura, who has broken the
glass ceiling and reintroduced the modern
Filipino artist to global awareness





WHAT DO WE REALLY KNOW about Ronald Ventura? We know he's won several art awards and is one of the most successful Filipino artists in the world. He has received numerous awards including the Artist of the Year Award from Art Manila (2001), the 13 Artists Awards from Cultural Centre of the Philippines (2003), and the prestigious Ateneo Art Gallery Studio Residency Grant in Sydney, Australia in 2005 for *The Human Study*, his series of graphite works on canvas. In 2012, auction house giant Christie's said, "Ventura has distinguished himself as a compelling visionary within contemporary Asian art over the last five years. Hailing from a background of rich storytelling and mythology within the Philippines, Ventura has rapidly expanded his idiosyncratic visual outreach to create highly recognisable and lucidly spellbinding canvases." Ventura's reputation has earned him various opportunities to exhibit both locally and abroad. *Philippine Tatler* sits down with the world's highest-selling Filipino contemporary artist to find out why many say he is well on his way to becoming a legend.



VIVID IMAGINATION

(From top) *Natural Highness*, 152x122cm, graphite and oil on canvas; *The artist at work*; (opposite) *Zookeeper*, fibreglass/resin, metal, found objects, acrylic, and charcoal

Philippine Tatler: *What's your background in art?*

Ronald Ventura: I finished Bachelor of Fine Arts, Major in Painting at the University of Santo Tomas. Just one semester after I graduated in 1993, the Dean of Architecture and Fine Arts [the two have been split into two colleges now] invited me to teach. I spent nine years teaching both lab and lecture classes. The school provided the syllabus, which I would upgrade or improve.

PT: *When did you know you had a talent for art? Do you think it was learnt or inborn?*

RV: You tell me. Around the time I was in kindergarten, when I was still learning the alphabet, I began to get hooked on [animation series] *Voltes V*, and began drawing Japanese robots on our door. Even before I memorised the alphabet [I was only up to the letter J] I was already drawing *Voltes V*. When I was in Grade 4, we were asked to write poems in school and accompany them with drawings. I was happy with the drawings I did, until I saw a classmate's work. I was impressed and asked why it was different from mine. He explained that his material or medium was different. Only then did I realise that by using other media, like pastels maybe, artworks would look different from each other. So when I was in Grade 5, I took a summer art workshop under Fernando Sena. I also started using oils during my elementary years, and by high school, I was already doing commissioned works for friends of friends and family.

PT: *When did you start joining competitions?*

RV: I competed in poster competitions and on-the-spot drawing contests of banks and private corporations in high school. In 1990, I won First Place in the Shell National Students Art Competition.

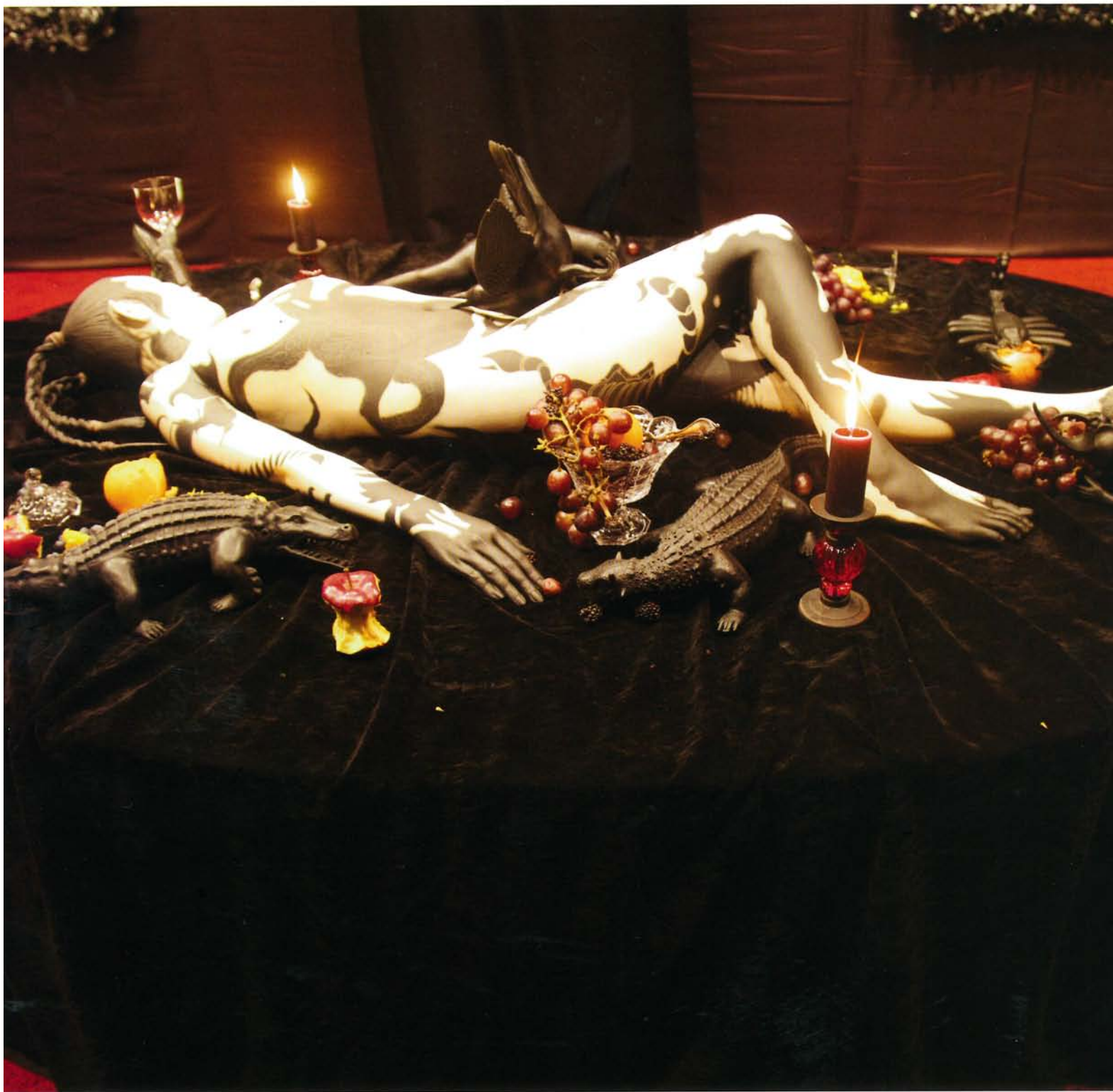
PT: *Where do you get your inspirations from?*

RV: My ideas for art come from a lot of things: experiences, art, history, fashion, culture—both personal and collective. Traditionally, for an exhibition, there is a series. But the art process isn't really like that. Think of it this way: when an idea comes to me, I save it in my computer, in respective folders. I then categorise these folders and store them. When the time comes that I need an idea for a show, I get these folders and choose from them. Then I research more and see what I can improve for the show.

PT: *Who are the artists you admire?*

RV: I admire a lot of artists like Michelangelo from the classics, Picasso and Pollack from the modern era, Magritte and Dali from the surreal period. Among Filipino artists, I look up to Luna and Hidalgo of course, and Botong Francisco and Vicente Manansala for the more modern. The





*Ronald Ventura was already drawing robots even before he
memorised all the letters of the alphabet*



list is long, to include contemporary artists both local and foreign.

PT: *They say you paint over your paintings? Is this true?*

RV: In some, yes. I follow a painting process. I do preliminary drawings; and sometimes I even put graffiti on the background of a painting. I paint for the day, and when I feel content, I stop. I can continue the next day or rest for a few days before continuing. I will paint and update a painting until I am satisfied. It's like a film director who is shooting a scene—at certain points he will feel like he needs more extras or more light. This is the closest analogy to my painting process that I can think of. It is like a process of addition and subtraction. I want the state of a painting updated. Sometimes, I paint a full figure but paint over it to leave only a foot or an arm because I am updating the work. Sometimes, an object that has already been painted must be sacrificed to achieve what I want in a painting. I always keep my options open, as my painting is not programmed; it is just how my mind plays.

PT: *You do sculptures aside from paintings. Any more art forms? What is your favourite?*

RV: I do photography, print, animated videos, and installations. Drawing is my passion. It is also a process. It is the skeleton of a painting or a sculpture. A drawing is like a diary of notes that will eventually be concretised.

PT: *Your recent exhibition, "Hunting Ground," staged in Italy has been reviewed as dark yet astounding. The pieces are actually something people would buy and proudly display in their homes. Do you think this is why your art is so well received worldwide?*

RV: I think this is because my works are not raw, they are more polished even to the point of sophistication. It's like a jacket. Even if it looks like a straitjacket, if done well, it becomes high fashion and people will buy and wear it because of the quality of the work. Like art versus fine art.

PT: *You also curate shows. Define your curating philosophy. Any upcoming shows curated by you?*

RV: For me, to curate is to cure. It is directing a show from the start, to help re-direct a show and make it better. For installation purposes, it is not really to design the exhibition but to help make it more effective and to achieve a better ambience for the audience. I have curated some of my shows and will curate "Vortex Manila 2" in Lugano in the first half of next year for Filipino artists Jigger Cruz, Lynyrd Paras, my brother Roldan "Manok" Ventura, and Yeo Kaa. It is exciting to curate the works of young painters as their paintings are fresh. I find it exciting to know and learn what they think.

PT: *How do you feel about people re-selling your art?*

RV: I really don't mind it and I am not bothered. I actually feel good that they had their time to enjoy my work and now my work will be enjoyed by others and my art can get to be spread to other audiences.

PT: *When is your next show?*

RV: My works [both paintings and sculptures] will have a solo booth at the Taipei Art Fair this November.

PT: *Describe your art in one sentence.*

RV: My art is to liberate visual perception. ①

ARTISTIC REASONS

(From top) Wild Park, painting on wall, and Beast, the assemblage in front; The artist takes a break; (opposite) Night Rebel, 61x91.5x113 cm, fiberglass/resin, metal, acrylic, and charcoal

