

Filipino artist exhibits in New York

Posted By [jmanalastas](#) On September 16, 2009 @ 8:00 am In [ENTERTAINMENT](#), [FEATURED](#) | [1 Comment](#)

Acclaimed Filipino artist **Ronald Ventura** will be presenting his first **solo exhibit** in the United States at **Tyler Rollins Fine Art** in **New York** from **September 17 to October 31**. **"Metaphysics of Skin"** will feature a new collection of paintings, sculptures and works on paper by the artist, following Ventura's successful show last year at the NUS Museum in Singapore, "Mapping the Corporeal."

Ronald Ventura was born in 1973, graduating with a degree in fine arts from the **University of Santo Tomas** in 1993. "Innerscapes" in 2000 was his first solo exhibit, which earned him much praise from contemporaries and art enthusiasts alike. Aside from getting a **studio residency grant** in Sydney, Australia from the **Ateneo Art Awards** in 2005, his talent was most recently recognized with an **Award of Excellence** from the 9th OITA Asian Sculpture Exhibition Open Competition in Japan.

A preview of some of the work that will be going on exhibit:



[Click for more](#)

Tyler Rollins talks to SPOT.ph about the artist and the promising future of Southeast Asian art in the West:

1. How did you find out about Ronald Ventura and his works, and what draws you most to them?

I have been watching Ventura's career with great interest since early on. I love the way he uses an almost Old Master technique of building up the canvas with layer on layer of images to create vibrant and sophisticated compositions. He combines realistic figurative imagery with cartoon and graffiti influences in an unusual way.

2. How will this exhibit be different from "Mapping the Corporeal?"

The NUS exhibition focused on the inner workings of the body, with lots of images inspired by anatomical drawings. "Metaphysics of Skin" takes its inspiration from the human skin, from the surface rather than the inside of the body.

3. What is the significance of skin in this show?

Ventura approaches skin as an expressive surface. He shows how it can literally be written on with tattoos or revealed obliquely through various coverings—clothing, superimposed imagery, etc. Ventura is fascinated with this idea of the "second skin"—that layer of cultural signifiers which we all carry around on our backs.

4. How does Ventura's work represent culture and contemporary life in the Philippines?

His works have a complex layering of images that on some level allude to the multifaceted identity of the Philippines, with influences from (different) cultures...His subjects are very contemporary—hip young people, tattoos, graffiti, cartoons from Japan and the US. All this gives the works a very urban vibe. Yet underneath this there are a lot of references to history and cultural evolution, and to a sometimes conflicted sense of national and personal identity. That's what reveals a real depth that goes beyond the edgy subject matter.

5. What can the New York audience look forward to most of all when they see the exhibit? Do you have any personal favorites?

I think they will be very impressed and even surprised...in some sense it's going to be an eye opening experience. Ventura's work can of course be appreciated without knowing anything about the Philippines, but I think his work is intriguing enough to make people want to learn more.

"The Strong and the Beautiful (*Si Malakas at si Maganda*)" is definitely a major work. It's one of Ventura's largest paintings and has an amazing layering of images. I also think "Mother's Mark" is a very powerful work. It shows a nude woman whose body is marked in several ways: by the process of ageing; with prominent stretch marks from pregnancy; and with a tattoo of a map of the Philippines on her left breast.

6. What are your hopes for the future of Southeast Asian art? How will Ventura and his works figure prominently in the years to come?

Southeast Asian contemporary art has so far been underrepresented in the West, and particularly in the US. In some sense it has also been overshadowed by the boom in Chinese art in recent years. But we are definitely seeing this change quite dramatically. There is a growing awareness about the very rich and dynamic art scene in Southeast Asia, and we're seeing a number of interesting museum shows address this, mainly in Europe...I am very confident that this trend is going to continue and grow much stronger in the near future. We are going to see increased values for Southeast Asian art, and a lot more opportunities for the artists to exhibit abroad.

Ventura has already established himself as one of the most noteworthy artists of the younger generation, so he is very well positioned now to really take off globally. He is already considered a "star" in Southeast Asia, and hopefully the New York exhibition will help launch him in the West. It's going to be an exciting period for all of us.

For more information about the exhibit, go to www.trfineart.com.

Article printed from Spot.PH: <http://www.spot.ph>

URL to article: <http://www.spot.ph/2009/09/16/metaphysics-of-skin-beyond-the-surface/>