



HELICRABTER AND BALUT CHRIST (DETAIL)
Mixed media on crab shell, cane, and bamboo + mixed media on duck eggshell, plaster, and objects
Variable dimensions
2011



BALUT CLOUD/HK CENTRAL
Mixed media on plywood
Variable dimensions
2011



SIRANGAN (EASTERN WIND)
Mixed media on lacquered/articulated wood, found objects, and brass letters
121.92 x 243.84 cm.
2010



POSPORO RIZAL (DETAIL)
Mixed media on recycled plywood
30 x 39.5 x 11 cm.
2000

ALWIN REAMILLO

b. 1964 Manila Philippines

- 1977-1981 ■ Philippine High School for the Arts
Visual Arts Major
- 1981-1985 ■ University of the Philippines
College of Fine Arts, Painting Major
- 1997-1999 ■ WA School of Visual Arts, WA Academy of
Performing Arts, Edith Cowan University
- 2003 ■ Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace
Training, Kimberley College of TAFE

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2011 ■ Ang Balutviand (A Transcultural Balut Project)
Tin-aw Art Gallery, Makati City, Philippines
- 2009 ■ Play by Ear I + II (Oido).Galleria Duemila,
Manila City, Philippines
- 2008 ■ Nicanor Abelardo Grand Piano Project.Jorge B
Vargas Museum + Filipiniana Research Center,
Manila City, Philippines
■ Playing by Ear (Oido).Gallery East, Western
Australia
- 2007 ■ Mang Emo + Mag-himo Grand Piano Project
Cultural Center of the Philippines + Galleria
Duemila, Manila City, Philippines
■ Fremantle Arts Centre, Western Australia
- 2007 to 2010 ■ Thuringowa Helicopter Project (Travelling
Exhibition).Pinnacles Gallery, Townsville,
Queensland, Australia.Museum of Contemporary
Art, Sydney, Australia (2009).Stokes Hill Warf,
Darwin, The Substation (Hubsons Bay Community
Arts Center, Melbourne, Australia (2010)
- 2004 ■ Ang Viand (MacKilling Me MicroSoftly with E-saw)
Tambayang Makiling Artspace, Manila City, Philippines
- 2001 to 2002 ■ Semena Santa Cruxtations or how to
gobble sideways and multiplyo kung paano
mamingwit sa tala ng kahirapan.Small Gallery,
Cultural Center of the Philippines; John Batten
Gallery, Hong Kong; 24HR Art / Northern
Territory Centre for Contemporary Art, Darwin,
Australia; Counihan Gallery in Brunswick,
Melbourne, Australia; Fremantle Arts Centre,
Western Australia (2002)

1999 ■ Humayo Kayo at Magparami / Gobble Forth and
Multiply.Fremantle Cold Storage Building,
Western Australia

1994 ■ P.I. FOR SALE.Hiraya Gallery
Manila City, Philippines

1989 ■ Ang kahon ay isang hukay ay isang kahon.Cultural
Center of the Philippines, Manila City, Philippines

1987 ■ At ang Bulung-bulungang de-cajon ni Mang Imo,
Budang Wayang at ArnulfoTikb-ang Pinaglabanan
Art Galleries, Manila City, Philippines



WHAT'S UP, DAFFY DOC? (NORTH)
Mixed media on balut basket, plaster, and objects
Variable dimensions
2004

ANGBALUTVIAND

a transcultural balut project by **Alwin Reamillo**
MANILA HONGKONG MANILA



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MANILA HONGKONG MANILA



15 APRIL - 6 MAY 2011

ARTIST TALK
29 APRIL 2011 | FRI@3PM



EGG OBJECTS FROM THE TRANSCULTURAL BALUT SERIES
Mixed media on duck eggshells, plaster, and objects
Variable dimensions
2011



TATLONG ITLOG (LOS INDIOS BRAVOS)
Mixed media on pine and objects
81.5 x 61 cm.
2011



BALUTAN (SOUTH)
Basket, fabric, foam, LED lights,
and egg objects
Variable dimensions
2011



POSPORO RIZAL (DETAIL)
Mixed media on recycled plywood
30 x 39.5 x 11 cm.
2000

A BALUT SELLER VISITS HONG KONG

BY JOHN BATTEN

Hong Kong's Statue Square is a legendary place for Filipino domestic helpers about to arrive in Hong Kong for the first time: its reputation as a meeting place for the Filipino community is well known by anyone with a friend or relative working in the city. I am sure there are similar meeting places in other cities worldwide where Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) work.

On arrival in Hong Kong the new, most probably nervous and shy, OFW will be met at the airport by a member of staff working for the job agency that arranged this contract or the employer for whom she will be working or maybe one of her own relatives who has herself arranged this new job.

On their first holiday after working their first week in this new city – usually a Sunday, a preferred day to meet friends and go to church - the new arrival will visit Statue Square. Statue Square is an actual square with 1960s-styled fountains and seating and space and located directly in front of the head office of architect Norman Foster's futuristic-looking Hong Kong Bank building. The main feature of the Square is the 'Black Man' – a statue of a long-forgotten Hong Kong Bank manager whose prominent bronze statue was painted with a protective black sealant a dozen years ago: thus, the Black Man.

As an aside: have you ever seen a public statue memorializing a banker before?

Agreed, it is odd. Very odd, but any person living in Hong Kong for a period of time will soon discover that, despite its claim to be modern and progressive, the city has many quirks and absurdities. Many new contract workers from the Philippines and Indonesia will be surprised, for example, to learn on arrival they will be working in a household that is relatively poor and living in crowded, high-rise, noisy conditions. Conditions vastly different from the quiet and spacious (but poverty-ravaged) homes they left in the Philippine provinces.

Statue Square is technically the area in front of the Hong Kong Bank building, but in parlance it refers to a wider area roughly bounded by the Filipino businesses found in Worldwide House, located in the middle of Hong Kong's Central Business District and then moving around the Legislative Council building, through nearby Chater Garden and spreading down towards Hong Kong Harbour where the much-loved, now demolished old Star Ferry building was originally sited next to City Hall, still providing shade and shelter.

On Sundays and public holidays, the streets in this area – busy and congested on weekdays – are closed to traffic, a rare allowance to Hong Kong's overseas workers and a hangover from the days of British rule. These empty streets become a bonus area of pedestrian activity for Filipinos – rock concerts, prayer meetings, dancing, beauty pageants, cultural displays set up on temporary staging alongside picnics, gambling and casual meetings in the surrounds of Statue Square.

Remarkably, the area when filled with Filipinos, replicates a map of the Philippine archipelago. Different areas have their designated meeting places: the Ibalois of Benguet Province meet near the actual Black Man while those from Mindanao meet near City Hall.

The new arrival will go to Statue Square with instructions to an exact spot knowing friends will be there; she will have with her, to distribute, homemade food direct from the province, gifts, letters and photographs; previously, prior to cheap telephone calls and the Internet, a cassette would be given so loved ones could hear each other. She has arrived in Hong Kong.

Alwin Reamillo walked into this Sunday replication of the Philippines shouting "balu--t, balu--t!" doing his own artist performance as a balut seller. His performance attracted little attention – he was, after all, performing in a place where activity of all kinds is common: Alwin had to compete with the itinerant photographer taking snaps and the phone card sellers doing the rounds for those who couldn't be bothered to walk to the nearby crowded Worldwide IDD shops. He had to compete with prayer meetings and happy chatting and people just doing their usual Sunday routine.

Alwin's performance replicated an earlier performance in Manila in 1999 for Ugnayan: Philippine International Performance Arts Festival - and in true Reamillo-style it was embellished and extended into an eight-hour performance a week later at Hong Kong ArtWalk; a yearly one-night art event involving all Hong Kong galleries.

Alwin had a basket full of his own balut; duck eggs strengthened with plaster and emulsion and depicting a variety of scenes and maps of Hong Kong and the Philippines. His balut have both a story-telling role and are objects of almost magical possession, something that could be honored and treated as an icon of mystical qualities. And in his basket he also has, for the genuinely hungry, a handful of real balut purchased in Wan Chai market – a place frequented by Filipinas to buy the shopping for their employers and a midweek meeting place. As usual in Alwin's work and seen on his balut, is a bouncing between cultures, historical events, locations, and a personal psychology that uncompromisingly draws on his background as the son of a Manila piano manufacturer; a graduate of the Philippine High School for the Arts and friendships with other artists, writers and film-makers; a long-time Australian resident and an internationally-traveled, respected and vital artist that dips in and out of Philippines' art world.

Talking with Alwin is always an event. His photographic memory providing anecdotes and details and a raconteur knowledge of Philippine history, politics and a broad understanding of how it all fits in. Spirited conversations long remembered for his wonderful diatribes, intransigence in the face of argument and a circular confidence that the listener eventually realizes is drawn from an inner purity and passion. Alwin lives and breathes and thinks art – and the stimuli of the world and its history is altered and subverted with both humour and anger in every art piece he tackles. If, in the future, Alwin's artistic output is placed end-to-end in art-retrospective style it will be a marvelous personal interpretation of Philippine history.

Alwin's recent work has revolved around large constructions and installation pieces. Often he works with communities (previously in the UK, New Zealand, Japan, Australia and the Philippines) and together he

has directed the construction of helicopters and whales using found objects and, in what is evolving into a signature style, the use of crab shells. The community use of eggshells will inevitably be a future, and undoubtedly an elaborate project.

Food has always featured prominently in Alwin's art, this most basic of human needs being a lynchpin for Alwin the artist and an audience that can immediately relate to its subverted depiction and use in his work. Pivotal in these community art projects is the communal preparation and eating of food. The crabs seen on the Thuringowa helicopter were communally cooked, eaten and prepared as art – apart from being delicious fun to eat, it is a basic team-building exercise prior to working together.

His most ambitious project in this mold, was the reconstitution of his family piano-making workshop with the original artisans brought together for the first time since the business closed over a decade ago. The results, a labor of love and devotion, are a series of pianos re-built in working order and improved by having their cases decorated by Alwin in his no-nonsense interpretations of Philippine history. A related series of piano 'wings' are simply beautiful objects. Alwin is renowned for his no-compromise-no-taboos attitude to art, so the beauty of these wings is a revelation.

During March 2011, Alwin was the Hong Kong ArtWalk artist-in-residence for one month with a studio located in an industrial building perversely overlooking the touristy Ocean Park. The studio quickly became filled with found objects and a profusion of Reamillo-ideas; the studio was almost too small to contain both! This quiet studio was the scene of great artistic energy and balut eggs rolled out, paintings painted and objects produced. On the night of ArtWalk, Alwin tramped the streets yelling "balu--t, balu--t!" and Filipinas emerged from high-rise towers and doorways to see what was being sold. The ArtWalk audience actually numbers an intense 2,000 people and Alwin visited galleries giving in each a shamanistic performance involving cloth, incantations and mysterious circles and lines of carefully measured out balut.

As a visitor here and always-immigrant in Australia and, at times, a recent older-wiser returnee to the Philippines and its art world, Alwin is often the outsider in his own performances.

After his Statue Square performance Alwin visited Hong Kong's hub of Philippine commercial activity, Worldwide Plaza, with its Philippine supply stores, remittance centers and cheap down-payment electronic shops. He was humbled by the frantic, but incredibly poignant activity of the place. Memories of that similar performance in Manila in 1999 and friends, growing up in San Andres Bukid, schooling in Makiling and his recent decision to spend more time living in the Philippines rather than Australia dwell in the cracks in this balut seller's visit to Hong Kong. ©

John Batten organizes Hong Kong ArtWalk and writes about art, culture and heritage.