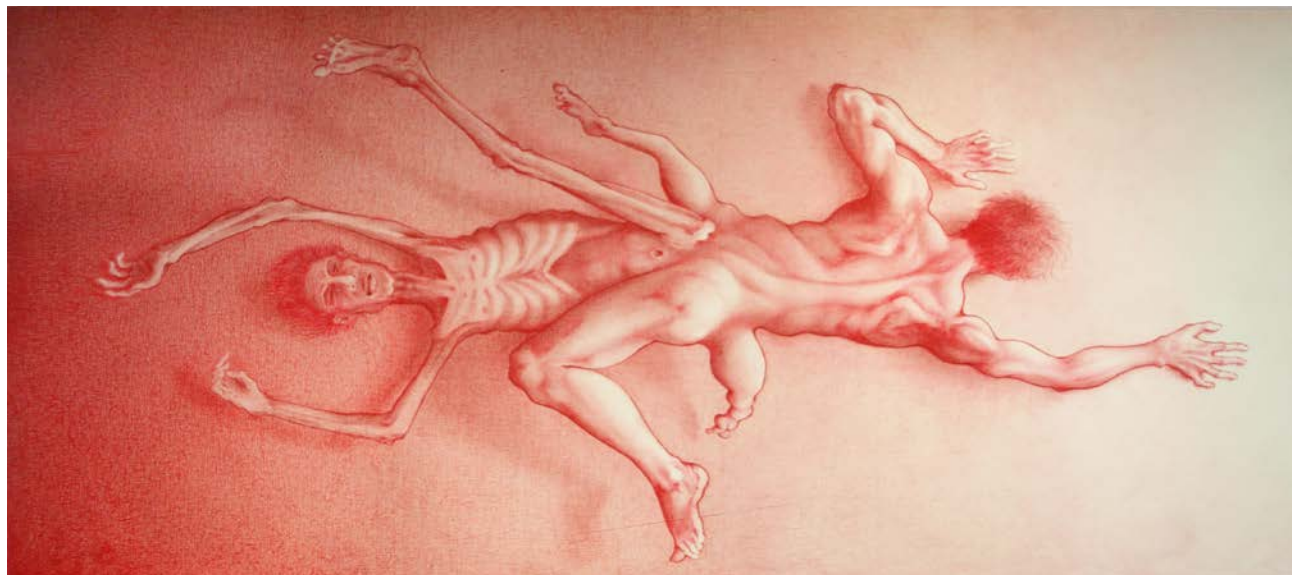


Sta. Juana explores myth making and the fabrication of idols in a series of icons that take from instant noodle packages. He imbues them surface weight and through paradox brings to fore the snare of instant gratification. The noodles themselves instantly appease hunger but it is illusory satiation, one that births a harmful craving on the palette and gut. This strategy points to the power of advertising and the marketing of ways of life. Sta. Juana evokes the empty promise of material trappings, the dangers of compromise and the ruin wrought by greed.

A gulf divides the generation of Fuentes's protagonist (and indeed Carlos Fuentes himself) and these artists, yet we find them preoccupied with the same questions. Aranton, Sicuya and Sta. Juana propose a revival of the rudimentary questions of being in a time overwhelmed by short-lived joys, hollow fulfilment, and empty success. They engage the 'frontier within' by drawing from their shared interests in both art and science, by their keen engagement with the world as artists and individuals, and through a potent realization of their being-in-this-world. It is an eagerness to cross horizons between disciplinary languages, an interest in engaging methods not necessarily within the ambit of art, a desire to redefine frontiers and introspection that may perhaps redraw these frontiers' limits. ©



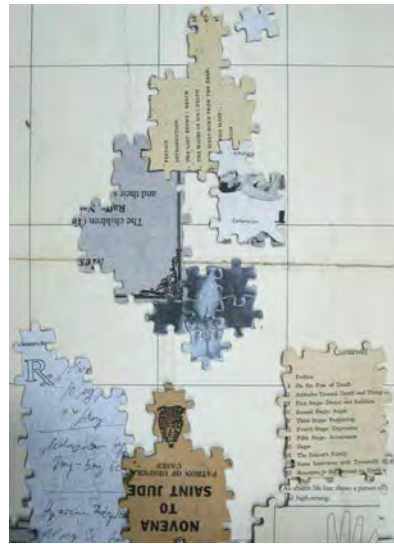
CARLO ARANTON
No. 13 - Anatomy of a Human Pendulum
Red carbon on canvas
91.44 x 152.4 cm.
2012



CARLO ARANTON
No. 16 - Discrepant Endeavors II
Red carbon on canvas
121.92 x 243.84 cm.
2012



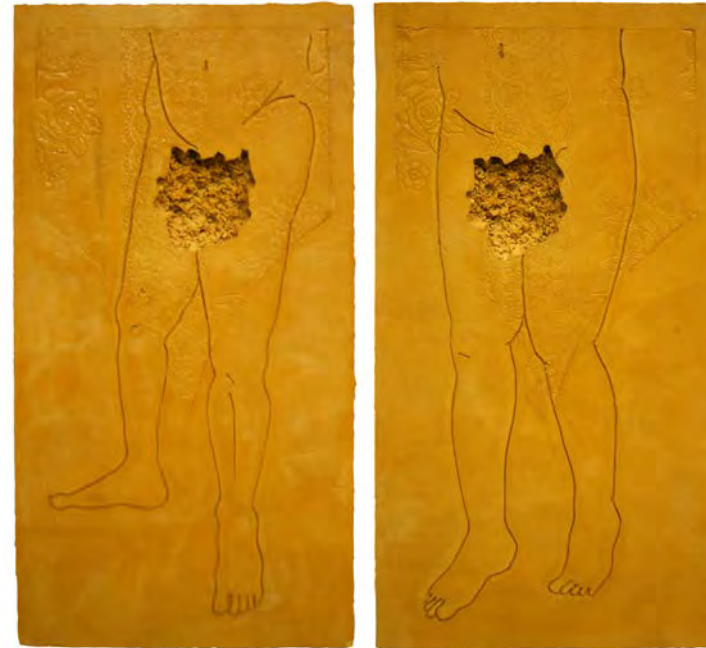
Case No. 10987: Judith (detail)



Case No. 0000: Morty (detail)



IOANNIS SICUYA
Case No. 10987: Judith
Mixed media
78.1 x 60.33 x 95.89 cm.
2013



ADEO STA. JUANA
Adam and Eve
Cast stone
2 panels
66.04 x 35.56 cm. each panel
2012



IOANNIS SICUYA
Case No. 0000: Morty
Mixed media
40 x 60.33 x 95.89 cm.
2013

Adeo Sta. Juana would like to thank the Nicolas family for their support.



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REALITY CHECK

CARLO ARANTON
ADEO STA. JUANA
IOANNIS SICUYA



A R T G A L L E R Y

11 January - 1 February 2012

OF TAILORED TRUTHS AND MALLEABLE FORMS

by Tessa Maria Guazon

"He had felt freed the moment he crossed the border at Juarez, as if he had walked into a different world. Now he was sure: each of us has a secret frontier within him, and that is the most difficult frontier to cross because each of us hopes to find himself alone there, but finds only that he is more than ever in the company of others."

- Carlos Fuentes, *The Old Gringo*¹

Near his novel's conclusion Carlos Fuentes's Ambrose Bierce sensed too that death is near, an epiphany gilding the inevitable end. This 'frontier within', that he describes as the most difficult of crossings, embodies our hope for individuality yet underscores our ties to the rest of humanity. In that wavering border between death and life, we confront the purpose of existence. We think of how much or how little of our life is our choice and doing.

Carlo Aranton, Ioannis Sicuya and Adeo Sta. Juana take this query further. They ask of our being and fate and whether the worlds we inhabit are fabrications or impositions. They realize the truths we adorn our lives as inherited and invented yet all the same bespeak the human spirit's tenacity. These are enduring attempts to restore order in a volatile and random world, one wherein according to Berger beauty is fleeting, "always an exception, always in despite of".² Yet humans have persistently sought a language to imagine order, to make sense of randomness. Art embodies such attempts, where a sense of order is constantly forged and more encompassing questions of being are faced.

These questions lead artists Aranton, Sicuya and Sta. Juana to an interesting path. Faced with unwieldy queries on existence and being, they take as cues the approaches of hard science in their use of experiments and models. In this act of making sense, they construct viable systems, imagine a more encompassing picture, and create visible forms to represent the divine. These approaches plot the workings of the psyche, the wonders and breadth of imagination, and the resilience of the human spirit. Sta. Juana's cast altar ensemble of relief sculpture, Sicuya's puzzle forms, Aranton's drawings referencing experiments on perception and vision, all embody a keen interest in a language that thrives on trial, conjecture, and truth seeking.

Physicist Juan Maldacena argues that gravity itself is an illusion, explaining that "particles and fields that make reality move about in a two-dimensional realm".³ He asks we imagine the universe as a hologram, a "two-dimensional object that when viewed under



ADEO STA. JUANA
Estray, Inutosmay, Ilagromay
Cast stone
3 panels
35.56 x 66.04 cm. each panel
2012



CARLO ARANTON
No. 10 – Four and Twenty Million Doors*
Blue carbon on canvas
91.44 x 121.92 cm.
2012



CARLO ARANTON
No. 11 – Discrepant Endeavors I
Blue carbon on canvas
60.96 x 182.88 cm.
2012

correct lighting conditions produce a three-dimensional image".⁴ Yet this two-dimensional form is "encoded with information that makes the three-dimensional image".⁵ And thus in what he refers to as a "quantum world" everything is in a "state of flux" even realms that scientists call "empty space".⁶

Dimensions under which the universe is imagined and theorized are themselves as Maldacena says a "matter of perspective" whether reality is two-or three-dimensional we have no way of telling. The image of the hologram befits the stance taken by the artists in their imagination of how we deal with the world. We fashion realities wherein truths are more forgiving and more allowing of survival.

Carlo Aranton's *Four and Twenty Million Doors*, carbon drawing on canvas plunges into deep space, a bottomless pit of numerous possibilities. This projection plan models three-dimensional space along horizons of opposing forces which the artist divides between pleasure and dreams, fear and pain. Silhouette figures outlined in space are tied with flimsy threads and seemingly thrown back and forth into the depths of the pit. Within life's interim points, we waver between these polarities choosing one or the other in utter wisdom or folly. Aranton's suite of works examines human behaviour embodied by choices and decisions, and how they define the overarching totality of our lives.

Discrepant Endeavors I (Rorschach) takes after the psychometric test developed by Hermann Rorschach. From the game Klecksographie of which Rorschach was fond as a child, Rorschach ink blots are patterns made after cards are folded over each other. Largely used as a projective test, those shown the patterns are asked to identify images. Since no definite image is formed by the blots, we project the images in our minds on what we see. Aranton's version is a carbon rendition

of the X-ray image of conjoined skeletons. It may manifest various forms including a snarling monster, a constellation of light and lines, or the cavern of an ancient temple. Here, Aranton surfaces a world in fragments – those inside our head and their very projections in real space-time.

An element of chance pervades the puzzle pieces of Ioannis Sicuya. Puzzle games often break down an image into minute parts, challenging the mind to reconstruct it and requiring dexterity to complete the broken-down picture. Sicuya renders puzzle parts metaphoric meaning, calling them "morsels of life", contingent realities and passing truths. In each of the works, Sicuya imagines individual fixations and represent them in emblems. *Case 10987* is an imagined woman named Judith whose life revolves around deadlines, an assiduous need to fill time and space. She is represented by an hourglass, and the race against time here translates to empty fulfilment. Representations of these manifold fixations include a human heart and a melting candle. Sicuya surfaces an apparent fact of contemporary life. Our persons are increasingly condensed into images, titles and material accoutrements. The puzzle works recall the artist's fondness for "taking apart" objects and putting them back together into entirely new forms.

Adeo Sta. Juana names his grouping of relief sculptures *Estray Inutosmay Ilagromay*, a pseudo-scientific label for an ensemble of cast forms that look eerily like imprints of excavated artefacts, long buried and now brought to light. The casting process in relief forms translates to a bevy of meanings for Sta. Juana. Here, negative space and the mould are as significant as the resulting form or imprint. Signifying absence, the artist sees the process as entwined with representation and time. Imprints are seen as inhabiting altered time and space because the original contexts of forms and objects are already of the past yet imbued enduring presence.

1 Fuentes, Carlos trans. Margaret Sayers Peden and the author. 1985. *The Old Gringo*. NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 161.

2 Berger, John. 1985. *The White Bird* in *The Sense of Sight* ed. L. Spencer. NY: Penguin.

3 Maldacena, Juan. November 2005. *"The Illusion of Gravity"* in *Scientific American* reprinted in *The Best American Nature and Science Writing 2006* edited by Brian Greene and Tom Folger. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 147.

4 Ibid

5 Maldacena, 147
6 Ibid, 148