



JOY MALLARI
Concept study for "No Signal"



CHRISTINA QUISUMBING RAMILO
Itaga Mo Sa Bato
Itak at bato
Size variable
2010

Elementary
Clear plastic film over embroidered fabric
36 x 48 in
2010



ALFREDO ESQUILLO JR.
Oil Spill (detail)



PAMELA YAN
Sugar Coated
Sugar flowers, plastic, metal, and collage on wood and sofa
Size variable
2010



FERDIE MONTEMAYOR
Erpatz
Acrylic on canvas
72 x 48 in
2010

SOUNDBYTE

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SOUNDBYTE

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JULY 16 - AUGUST 4, 2010



BY PATRICK D. FLORES

SIREN

If in the previous exhibition *Smokescreen*, art trained its focus on the mirage that the media conjures to make people believe in actually existing democracy, the current one cups its ear to the ground to sense the sonic ploys of the charade. *Soundbyte* seeks to grasp the wavelength of this mystification by rendering visual the sad state of a public sphere beholden to both icon and buzz, to say nothing yet of the celebrity cult, gossip, and the game-show-comedy-bar routine that dominates the landscape of dreams. The current political dispensation, which was inaugurated vaudeville style, owes much of its existence to this sordidness, so that the elite that controls our light, water, and entertainment also controls our politics – all this, of course, in the guise of change, couched in that glib copy about a “straight path” that leads to the hacienda.

The art in this exhibition confronts this situation largely through the critique of the media. There is, therefore, a great deal of negativity in this exercise because of the need to demystify the spin of meisters in places both high and low. While the object is sound, the expression is image, which is the source of the resonance.

First is the technology that produces the sensorium. Pamela Yan-Santos and Kawayan de Guia create the televisual environment that offers up a cornucopia of sugar-laced enticements and hectic stimuli, the proverbial icing on the cake that the populace has to eat amid the decay of society, or the semiotic glut that cannot enlighten the mass. Robert Besana quotes the poster as a locus of marketing and advertising, importuning us to perform the farce together as if in a consensus of buffoons. And Leo Abaya astutely displaces sound with sight, text, and reading as he flashes in his video work fraught words on which mouths comment with ready cognates, prompting viewers to discern the speech and speculate on the rhetoric. Joy Mallari takes the cue, as it were, by appropriating the *letras y figuras* format to paint the cultural topography, distilled in the pregnant word “hello,” which actually means: We simply do not get it!

Second is the metaphorical level of speech, fabricated by sound through the oratory of promise. Christina Quisumbing Ramilo probes how idiom or aphorism works through such phrases as “Itaga mo sa Bato” and “Mark my Word” in conceptualist experiments that betray hope despite the mass deception. These commitments in the realm of politics are uttered for effect apparently, and it is but tragic that a hopeful people still take them at face value. Here, it is hope that is abused, and the abuse happens every time career politicians open their mouth and are heard, every time a poseur takes on the mantle of reform, every time the word change is invoked. Thus, Alfredo Esquillo’s contribution is salient because it exposes the limit of fantasy and betrays the tainted hand that had contrived it.

Third is the abjection that underlies this condition. Ferdie Montemayor’s stark portrait of dearth and Eric Guazon’s scenario of both miracle and vice, gambling and epiphany

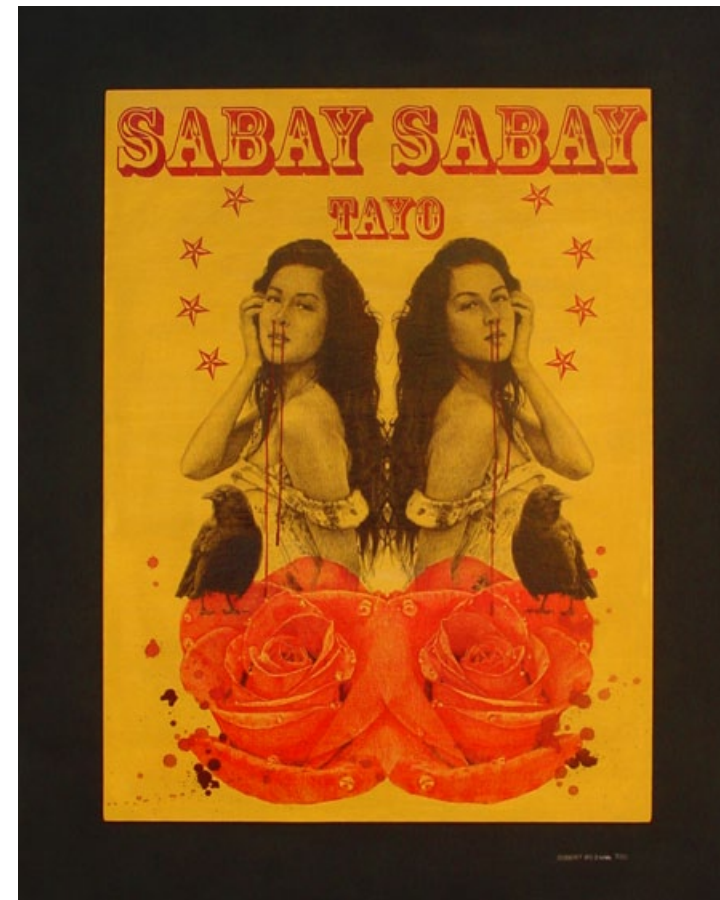
are emblematic of the circumstances and consequences of a kind of politics that lets power get away with mystification because the people are so inured to its spectacles and are not moved to question the *palabas*.

What we need in the present is a different sonic scape, an alternative to the immersive domination of soundbytes, those condensed pieces of information or data that simplify complex reality into good and evil, black and white, savior and villain. These are modes of shortcircuiting discourse, drivel of self-righteousness and hypocrisy mouthed by the privileged for the sake of their hapless, spellbound peons. Surely, when we begin to intuit other echoes, beyond the din of courtiers and professional opportunists of the so-called intellectual class, we will realize that those claiming to usher in change are actually those who steadfastly desire to deny it because to do so would be to turn against their very basic instincts. The fact that the government of the day has invested in assembling a “communications” coterie, made up of right-wing media operatives, testifies to the capital on which its clout has been founded: news management, pseudo punditry, infotainment, and that spurious term “messaging.” When these soundbytes fritter away, when gossip on television preceding the manufactured news dissolves along with its vexatious purveyors, when the star or middling messiah figure is unmasked as a fumbling profiteer, there will be new inflections and registers to permeate our political life. In the meantime, we can only sing that Beatles ditty about an ominous yellow submarine.

Yes, we have sunk so low, merrily, with or without *wang wang*. ©



LEO ABAYA
Talking Silent Pictures
Single channel video
11 minutes 37 seconds (looped)
2009



ROBERT BESANA
Wer N U? D2 N Wel
Ballpoint on wood
60 x 48 in
2010



KAWAYAN DE GUIA
Zero
Mixed media
60 x 48 x 2.75 in
2009



ALFREDO ESQUILLO JR.
Oil Spill
Mixed media
72 x 36 x 5.63 in
2010



ERIC GUAZON
Head Spin
48 x 60 in (triptych)
Acrylic, graphite, and collage on canvas
2010