



HAND-ME-DOWN
Oil on canvas
36 x 30 inches/ 91.44 x 76.2 centimeters
2012



OFF DUTY
Oil on canvas
24 x 32 inches/ 60.96 x 81.28 centimeters
2012



CROSS FIRE
Oil on canvas
79 x 79 inches/ 200.66 x 200.66 centimeters
2011



CROSS FIRE (detail)



ESCAPE ACT
Oil on canvas
60 x 36 inches/ 152.4 x 91.44 centimeters
2012

DENNIS ATIENZA

b. 1976
Iligan City, Mindanao, Philippines

- 2000 ■ Technical Education And Skill Development Authority Consumer Electronics
- 1997 ■ Technological University of the Philippines
Bachelor of Fine Arts Major in Product Design Development Technology

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 ■ OFFLOAD, Tin-aw Art Gallery, Makati City
- 2010 ■ LEGACY, Nineveh Art Space, Sta. Cruz, Laguna
- 2009 ■ SA MUNDO NG KAMELYO, Nineveh Art Space, Sta. Cruz, Laguna

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2012 ■ SMALL WORLD, Tin-aw Art Gallery, Makati City
- 2010 ■ JERU-JERUSALEM, Nineveh Art Space, Sta. Cruz, Laguna
SMOKESCREEN, Tin-aw Art Gallery, Makati City
SIGNOS, Gallery Anna, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City
- 2009 ■ LITANYA, Tin-aw Art Gallery, Makati City
ROMANTIC EVENING OF ART & MUSIC, Palm Groove Rockwell Club, Makati City
ART ANGEL SHOW, Nineveh Art Space, Sta. Cruz, Laguna
DIMINISHING RETURNS, Tin-aw Art Gallery, Makati City
- 2008 ■ PEPE GOES TO MARKET, Tutok Bantayog Revisioning Rizal, Taguig City
- 2007 ■ TUTOK KASAYSAYANG, Art Space Glorietta, Makati City
BOXED EXHIBIT 2, Cultural Center of the Philippines
- 2006 ■ BOXED EXHIBIT 1, Big Sky Mind, Quezon City
- 2005 ■ RELOAD, Galeria Fernando Artes, Muntinlupa City

AWARDS

- 2011 ■ Philippine Art Awards Finalist, Metro Manila Division
- 2008 ■ Metrobank Art and Design Excellence 2nd Place Winner
- 1997 ■ Shell National Painting Competition, Finalist
- 1994 ■ Instituto Cervantes Letras Y Figuras, Finalist



DEPLOYMENT (detail)



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OFF LOAD

Dennis
Atienza



tin-aw
A R T G A L L E R Y

15 - 30 June 2012

OBJECTS OF REFUGE

Tessa Maria Guazon

Near the end of unwanted exile, Dennis Atienza found solace in objects, unable to trust a soul in a place drastically transformed from great promise to deep peril. It was a bag of his few and remaining belongings.

Several years back, he found himself a 'runaway', working odd jobs in the cold regions of North Saudi, almost nomadic and nearly nameless. He was stranger in unforgiving land, relying on intermittent mercies.

Finally transported to what he thought was a safe house he and his companions were asked to rid themselves of everything they carried. Divesting himself of the bag that has become dear to him was a harrowing experience. He was left with the clothes on his back and the little money he saved and hid in the seams of his pants and shirts. This paltry existence contrasts strongly with bright prospects cherished when he first arrived in Riyadh.

Filipino migrant labour is dispersed globally. In the farthest corners of the world Filipinos toil as domestics, engineers, teachers, hailed for being fast learners, being adept at multiple tasks and a facility for the English language.

There are about 175 million migrants all over, half are women workers.² Of this number, 8.2 million hail from the Philippines. 60 percent of Filipino migrant workers are stationed in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar are transient homes to large numbers of Filipino migrants and skilled workers.³

Filipino migrant labour has since been funnelled to destinations across the world since the Marcos era. 14 percent of the country's GDP come from workers' remittances, paltry reason for government bureaucrats to hail them as the nation's new heroes.⁴ In 2006, this GDP contribution amounted to 15 billion US dollars rising to around 23 billion in 2011.⁵ This giddy count while hollow reason for the state to make merry cannot cover the irrevocable loss of sundered families left behind.

DeParle is right to claim that while trade in goods and finance are regulated and monitored by international agencies, the journey he calls "most personal and perilous" is not overseen by monitoring bodies equal to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank or The World Trade Organization.⁶ Inroads are plagued by setbacks. While the Domestic Workers Convention was being ratified in Geneva, an Indonesian maid was simultaneously beheaded in Saudi Arabia for killing her abusive employer.⁷

the artist astutely calls them they become objects themselves, inanimate and lifeless. And yet Dennis transforms these mute objects to crowing cornucopia, crammed into finite spaces of luggage and package boxes. Dispatched across numerous points in the globe, they closely represent migrant workers' residual fates.

The miles that separate home from foreign land can be likened to the gulf that marks experience in disparate locations. One agrees with John Berger when he writes that after money is saved, the migrant worker proceeds to collect photographs.⁸ Indeed, Dennis's recollections were closely accompanied with the showing of photographs. These were pictures of him in places where he seemed an entirely different person where he carried a different name, put on weight, and grew a beard. The pictures testify to nightmarish experience and yet serve assurance he survived.

Dennis Atienza recasts experience in a recollection founded on art. Upon return, he discovered himself without a voice, literally unable to speak and suffered throat problems for prolonged stretches. Nightmares hound him. It is in art where he found his voice anew. But what indeed, is the object of such remembrance?

Atienza's pieces surface the painful contradictions that beset migrant workers. In the relentless movement of bodies across world borders,



CUSTODIAN
Oil on canvas
24 x 32 inches/ 60.96 x 81.28 centimeters
2012



LINE UP (1 to 5)
Oil on canvas
60 x 48 inches/ 152.4 x 121.92 centimeters (5 panels)
2012

Dennis's story is not new. We hear it frequently, have our hearts splintered every so often we succumb to despair. The condition he speaks of and from where his knowledge springs forth is the malady of contemporary displacement. The artist belongs to the third generation of overseas workers, his father having gone to the Middle East before him as well as an uncle.

The worker destined overseas confronts her travails well before she leaves. It would seem the difficulties encountered while home are omens of a thorny future. Berger with sharp insight speaks of this aspired for future as one of "unending anticipation" that of "what is to come, what is to be gained", in which there is little hope but for those displaced "to exchange themselves for the future".¹ The wager often leads to perilous results – foundering existence in faraway lands, bleak hopes and in the artist's words, "unresolved cases". Nomads of this global era, migrant labourers trek uncertain trails, risk back doors, enduring slave-like conditions. The work force follows the global routes of goods and money.

In so many cases, migrant workers barter life for the future. It is not all surprising that in the artist's works, toiling bodies are curtailed and altogether absent. Luggage, bags and boxes are filled to brim with objects heaped atop each other. An opened suitcase showcases the tools of the migrant worker's trade – passports, hammers, saw, a nurse's cap, feather duster and domestic implements, all these eerily reminds us of the manner soldiers are armed before deployment. In works where the body appears, they are shown furtively escaping entrapment or veiled by boxed packages. Dennis Atienza's works show a surfeit of objects, a paradoxical bounty.

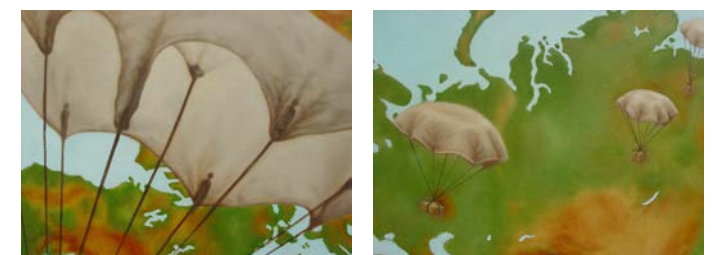
Objects dispatched and sent home become replacements for affection and presences missed. As the state regards overseas workers like statistics, whether remittance figures, abuses, or deaths, or as "cases" as

he succeeds to show the contexts in which the images he makes are embroiled. For the Philippines, it is the delusion of an economy kept afloat by remittances and the incongruity of covering up failed economic plans. Part of the state's bizarre pronouncements include heralding overseas labourers heroes when in truth, the less fortunate of them are like game ushered into slaughter houses.

Atienza awakens us from this stupor, transforming his very own experience and reversing oft-received associations with fruits of toil sent home. We arrive at a point that Berger locates as where "experience and revolution" (albeit the tender but no less restless kind) become one. ©



DEPLOYMENT
Oil on canvas
36 x 60 inches/ 91.44 x 152.4 centimeters
2012



DEPLOYMENT (detail)



THE MESSENGER (detail)

¹ Berger, John. *Another Way of Looking* cited in Robbins, Bruce. "Feeling Global: Experience and John Berger". 1982-3. Duke University Press: Boundary 2.11, 303.

² These figures from the International Labour Organization factsheet <http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/migrant-workers/lang-en/index.htm> accessed 11 June 2012.

³ Torres, Sophia Ann. 21 June 2008. "Filipino migrant workers illustrate a worldwide plight" <http://thepinoy.net/filipino-migrant-workers-illustrate-a-worldwide-plight/> accessed 10 June 2012.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <http://www.bsp.gov.ph/statistics/keystat/ofw.htm> accessed 11 June 2012.

⁶ DeParle, Jason. 26 June 2010. "A World Ever More On the Move", in <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/27/weekinreview/27deparle.html> accessed 10 June 2012.

⁷ DeParle, Jason. 8 October 2011. "Domestic Workers Convention May be Landmark"

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/09/world/domestic-workers-convention-may-be-landmark.html> accessed 11 June 2012.

⁸ Berger cited in Robbins, 303.