



Museum of Contemporary Art Tucson

Wylwyn Dominic Reyes ***The Early Years***

MOCA Tucson
July 26-August 14, 2013

With *The Early Years* Wylwyn Dominic Reyes slyly challenges preconceptions about art viewing with witty and deceptively simple subtractions and insertions into MOCA's Great Hall. Availing himself to a distinctive take on classic conceptual tactics, he brings a welcome mix of humor and serious inquiry to his art making. Insightfully toying with expectations, he gently prods the audience to look past the accepted surface of things. Notions of identity and consciousness are at the heart of Reyes' undertaking, but contrary to what is often the case he favors winning, ambiguous nuance over explicitness. It's all (or can be interpreted as being) "about" these things, though a large part of the appeal of his evaluations of social norms and how they apply to museum going is their lack of heavy-handed didacticism. Instead a droll sense of wonder is evoked, a fresh mixture woefully missing in much contemporary art.

With a considered lack of excess, these works upend viewers' assumptions and provide both physical and psychic room to appreciate the perceptual and phenomenological characteristics of looking at art. *Museum Etiquette No. 7* consists of a tray of water on a pedestal attached to a microphone, a modified guitar amplifier, and a 12" sub-woofer. The reverberation from the nearness of the microphone to the speaker creates cymatic reactions (visual sound waves) manifested into geometric patterns seen in the tray and in an accompanying large projection. Ambient sound produces waves in the liquid, however for the full effect people are encouraged to make vocal noises into the microphone. Raising or lowering pitch and volume, the participant can indulge in a variety of loud and peculiar resonant sounds to get the most reaction from the fluid. Implicit is an examination of how social systems mold our behavior, which in a museum environment can appear slightly absurd. *Museum Etiquette No. 7* mocks these practices by allowing the viewer to act antithetically to the convention of being quiet in such a setting. It also deftly compels visitors to look at a work of art that is about experiencing the museum, while they are doing just that. A double

whammy, experientially, complimented by another duplication, that of watching the water in the tray as well as projected and blown up to outsize proportions on the wall.

Herman, a small forged steel, silicone, and ink sculpture, in shape reminiscent of a sea urchin, acts as a stand-in for the conflicted feelings of the artist put on display. Shyly, somewhat awkwardly, it occupies an angle where the floor meets the wall, though a spotlight illuminating the spiky, retiring object means its quest for anonymity is an exercise in futility. Reyes has also cut two large painting-sized holes in one of the gallery's walls, disrupting the structure of the museum itself, allowing one to see through it. *Wall Piece* has historical precedents stretching from Gordon Matta-Clark to Michael Asher and beyond, acknowledged by its impudently generic title. At the same time it is a specific interference into this particular building, bringing about a unique new "wall piece." And, thanks to the fact that the squares can be seen through to the other side where The Great Hall's garage doors' glass grid lets light in, they form an elegant zone of perceptual delight and surprise that conjures up Robert Irwin and James Turrell, while remaining distinctly Reyesian.

Even the title *The Early Years* dryly comments on the conventions of retrospectives and museological clichés. Reyes really only started making art after the age of thirty, and is now thirty-five, so these are the "early years" of his art making but not the earlier years of his life, as the title would usually imply. That spirit of thoughtful mischief animates this exhibition that manages an unlikely and pleasing combination of making us laugh, while simultaneously and provocatively posing perennial questions of metaphysical and artistic import.

List of Works

East to West

Wall Piece
Wood, drywall
2013

Museum Etiquette No. 7
Water, amplifier, speaker,
microphone, projection,
spotlight
2013

Herman
Steel, ink, silicone,
spotlight
2013

Wylwyn Dominic Reyes was born in Manila in 1978. He is in the process of completing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Art: 3-Dimensional Studies at the University of Arizona, where he received a Misto-Ertz scholarship, and has been included in several group exhibitions in Tucson. *The Early Years* is his first museum exhibition.