osage
CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY

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# Media Release

Attention Arts and Culture Editors

26 December 2013

For immediate release

# *Poetics of Materiality*

**Ringo Bunoan**

Manila

**Young Rim Lee**

Seoul

**Ng Joon Kiat**

Singapore

**Yu Ji**

Shanghai

Curated by

**Charles Merewether**

Time

4 January to 4 February, 2014

**Opening Reception: 5 to 7 pm, 4 January**

Monday to Saturday: 10.30 am to 6.30 pm

Sunday 2.30 to 6.30 pm

Open to special appointments & arrangements outside of these times.

Closed from 31 Jan to 2 Feb

Venue

**osage hong kong**

4/F, Union Hing Yip Factory Building, Hing Yip Street,

Kwun Tong, Kowloon, Hong Kong

## CURATORIAL STATEMENT

**By Charles Merewether**

These four artists Ringo Bunoan (The Philippines), Young Rim Lee (South Korea), Ng Joon Kiat (Singapore), and Yu Ji (China) come from four different countries that together span East and South East Asia. Placed besides one another, the art work of these four artists show a certain unity as much as a distinction. This unity is a commitment to the materiality of artistic practice not simply the basis of much of artistic practice but, as its subject.

Utilizing cloth or cardboard, paint, wood or stone, almost all materials have not been previously used. They are raw or manufactured materials to be used or re-used. The process or, in other words, the very making or construction of their work is integral to the subject itself. The work gains its inspiration not from some external factor, as if imposed from without. The work builds through and out of itself. That is, it comes from within, out of a then unclear logic inscribed in the first lineaments, if not principles, of its construction. The understanding of this logic comes through the process of working and reflection and working again. There is a slow succession of decisive actions, additions or interventions. There is nothing swift about this process nor necessarily certain. It may fail or not succeed to build. Or, hopefully, it will gain momentum and the process continues and then perhaps stops. Finished. The work is done.

The work is, in this moment, an artwork, gaining an autonomy which is neither contingent on an external factor nor, at this point, on the artist. The artwork becomes itself, autonomous. It speaks out of itself and to the viewer whose curiosity lead to an engagement. Commentators have often aligned this kind of practice to that of poets and there is a truth to this observation. The economy of words chosen, of building lines and verses. There is no excess here but, a lean economy and with it, a reflexivity, aware that in its making, its constitution, the poem or artwork will be shown again but, differently. Let me start again. This is wood, paint, cloth, stone, cardboard that each have a certain banal or commonplace character. However, the use of this manifested materiality involves a change of form, of shape and function. We do not see this process, as described above, so much as experience its outcome. Through this process, we become witness to the poetics of materiality. The work of each of the artists and the artwork they create is about this process of transformation of materials from the mundane to the poetic.

## ABOUT THE WORKS

### RINGO **BUNOAN**

Pillows are banal and common objects. They are the sites of countless nights and mid-day naps, we all lay horizontal, dreaming, drooling as our subconscious runs unchecked. Pillows catch what leaks from our minds, via our mouths and eyes as we sleep. They are the sites of physical rest and rejuvenation, as well as cradles of our ideas, memories, nightmares and dreams.

Visibility takes monumental shape with *The Wall* - literally an entire wall of used pillows. Each individual pillow serves as a personal archive of another person's accumulation of sleep, or a stranger's subconscious saliva. Ranging from white to mismatched bright colors to subtle hues of yellow and brown stains, *The Wall* functions as a group portrait of interior substance. The wall of used pillows also mimics a pile of bodies, where the lines between pleasure, desire, and violence become blurred. As an installation, it is a monument of soft mass – standing with a side of Minimalism that embraces process, the body, collaboration, and common material.

(Extracted from Gina Osterloh's essay, "Pillow Talk", Catalog Essay for Ringo Bunoan, Solo Exhibition at Silverlens Gallery, March 2008.)

(Courtesy of Ringo Bunoan and Osage Gallery)

The Wall
2008
Size variable

YOUNG RIM **LEE**

"I have been intrigued by the spatial experiences through artworks such as paintings. My main interest is related to space and in looking at the relationship between the pictorial and the physical realms. That includes looking at relationships between painting and the actual objects, between inner space (image) of artwork and outer space (surroundings or actual space), and between the viewer and the artwork in a space.

With this exploration of the nature of painting within real space, my practices are mainly accomplished in the area between painting and sculpture, while questioning what painting could be or what is experienced through the painting in relation to real space."

(Courtesy of Young Rim Lee and Osage Gallery)

Nonstructural – Leaned Blue
2012
Wood stain, acrylic on wood
68 x 64 cm

(Courtesy of Young Rim Lee and Osage Gallery)

Constructions – Adjacent Plum
2013
Acrylic on wood
107 x 122 cm

NG JOON **KIAT**

"This set of work is part of a map series I am developing for my next solo. It looks at the subtle counter-tensions between earth spaces as fixed territories with defined borders and the natural changing character of earth spaces. I am keen to look at the constant evolving physicality of earth's spaces, for example, a new land appear from sea as earth's tectonic plate shifts, an unmaintained city quickly turns into a forest, land turning into oceans etc. I am keen in seeing how the unspoken character of nature takes action as it pleases and disregards man-defined spaces."

(Courtesy of Ng Joon Kiat and Osage Gallery)

Border Series: The Unspoken and Nature
2013
Acrylic on cloth
60 x 80 cm

(Courtesy of Ng Joon Kiat and Osage Gallery)

Border Series: The Unspoken and Nature
2013
Acrylic on cloth
60 x 80 cm

**YU** JI

"The "Public Space" series is a deconstruction of the public toilet architecture in China since 1949. I found those spaces composed of squares, rectangles and straight lines having a certain widely accepted formula in its design which is both abstract and apparently directional. I borrowed from it the ratio and structure in constructing my own space. To me this work does not lean on any interior wall. Standing on its own, it is fragile, a useless piece of architecture."

(Courtesy of Yu Ji and Osage Gallery)

Public Space No. 1
2007
Plaster, dust and wood
45 x 150 cm

“The human body has always been an important yet obscure part of my work. During my working process, I deliberately downplayed the physical characteristics or features of the body. I chose not to obsess over details, and removed any dramatic elements or emotions from my artwork. What I tried to explore was if the body does not represent any one person, carry any emotions, showcase any physical details, or carry any anatomical accuracy, how it can move people, or how its look can be trusted upon.”

(Courtesy of Yu Ji and Osage Gallery)

Tiny Figure
2013
Cement and iron
7 x 35 cm

## ABOUT THE CURATOR

CHARLES **MEREWETHER** was born in Scotland and earned his Ph.D. in Art History from the University of Sydney. He is an art historian and writer on modernism and contemporary art who has taught at universities in the United States, Mexico and South America, Australia and Singapore. He was Collections Curator at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles from 1994 to 2004, Artistic Director and Curator for the 2006 Sydney Biennale, Deputy Director for the Cultural District, Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi from 2007 to 2008, and Director at Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore and LASALLE College of the Arts from 2010 to 2013. Since 1991 and at the ICAS, he has curated a number of major exhibitions of major artists from across South America and Asia, including Central Asia. He has published extensively articles and books including *Ai Weiwei: Under Construction* (2008) and *Ai Weiwei: Beijing, Venice, London, Herzog & de Meuron* (2008) and *After Memory: 40 Years of Milenko Prvacki* (2013). He has also co-edited *After the Event: New Perspectives on Art History* (2010), *Art, Anti-Art, Non-Art: Experimentations in the public sphere in postwar Japan 1950-1970*, (2007).

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

RINGO **BUNOAN** is an artist, curator and researcher based in Manila, Philippines. She received her BFA in Art History from the University of the Philippines in 1997. Her work explores readymades, histories and given situations. Emphasizing the physical and metaphorical dimensions of the material, she responds to personal and collective everyday experiences in the context of larger social, cultural and historical issues.

Bunoan taught at the UP College of Fine Arts from 1997 – 1998. From 1999 – 2004, she led an independent artist-run space, Big Sky Mind. From 2007 to 2013, she worked as the researcher for the Philippines for Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong and initiated special research projects on artist-run spaces and Filipino artist Roberto Chabet. In 2010, she co-founded King Kong Art Projects Unlimited in Manila, and was of the lead curator of "Chabet: 50 Years", a series of exhibitions in Singapore, Hong Kong and Manila from 2011 – 2012. She is a recipient of the Thirteen Artist Award from the Cultural Center of the Philippines (2003) and the Silverlens Foundation Completion Grant (2007).

YOUNG RIM **LEE** is a mixed media artist born in Seoul, Korea. After completing the coursework of her Ph.D in Cognitive Psychology at Ewha Women's University in 2004, she

went on to study Furniture Design at Raffles Design Institutes in Singapore and obtained her BFA from LASALLE College of the Arts in 2012. She stared participated in group exhibition in Singapore since 2009 and has exhibited in 'Painting in Singapore & A Star In The Overcast' (Equator Project, 2013), 'Icream Project' (Merely Ice Cream Shop, 2012), LASALLE Show (Lasalle College of the Arts, 2012) and 'Raw Art Competition Finalist Show' (The Gallery, 2011). She now lives and works in Singapore.

**NG** JOON KIAT graduated from Singapore's LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts and completed his master degree of Fine Arts at the University of Kent in England. Ng lives and works in Singapore where he is heavily involved in the art community. In 2012 he was selected as one of twenty-five Asian artists to exhibit work with Britain's Royal Academicians at the Institute of Contemporary Art, LASALLE. He currently also serves on a panel at the National Arts Council of Singapore.

The artist exhibits his work on an international platform as well as within Singapore. His work has been shown abroad in galleries such as Osage Gallery in Hong Kong and the Cultural Centre of the Philippines. His solo exhibitions include those at the National Museum of Singapore in 2007 and at the Esplanade in 2010. Collectors of his art include The National Art Gallery of Singapore and private collectors from across Europe and Asia. He was awarded the SIA Excellence in the Arts award, Singapore's National Arts Council scholarship, Singapore's Georgette Chen Scholarship and the Ericsson Scholarship for art.

**YU** JI was born in Shanghai and graduated in 2011 from the Sculpture Department of the Fine Arts College of Shanghai University with an MFA degree. Her practice mainly deals with sculptures and installations, and also involves performance and videos. Paying much attention to nature and the repetitive process of labour, her work endeavors to explore the relationship between time and nature, looking at the vital yet mysterious connection between body/spirit and the world. To Yu Ji, being an artist is more of a spiritual journey of transforming things into life experience rather than a mere career title.

In 2008, she co-founded "am art space", one of the few rare active non-profit experimental art spaces in Shanghai.

## ABOUT OSAGE GALLERY

Osage Gallery was established in Hong Kong in 2004 and grew quickly to become one of Asia's largest commercial gallery groups. Osage has become well-known in art circles in Asia and in the art world for its uncompromising support for the most challenging and critically thought-provoking contemporary art.

Osage Gallery is curatorially-driven and devoted to the exhibition and promotion of Asian contemporary visual arts. It aims to be a catalyst for the creative expression of artists and the creative expression of the artists and the active engagement of audiences by embracing a global, multidisciplinary and diverse approach to the creation, presentation and interpretation of the arts of our time. It examines the questions that shape and inspire us as individuals, cultures and communities through high quality programmes of research, exhibition and publication.

www.osagegallery.com

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## ENQUIRIES

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