

University of Idaho News

“Synthetic Ritual” Exhibit Opens at Prichard Art Gallery

Wednesday, August 22 2012

MOSCOW, Idaho - The Prichard Art Gallery will kick off its 2012-13 exhibition season with “Synthetic Ritual.” The exhibit runs Aug. 16 - Sept. 29, with a reception and gallery talk held on Friday, Aug. 24 at 4 p.m.

“Synthetic Ritual” explores the significance rituals and superstitions play in people’s lives while living in a technologically driven world. The exhibit explores three areas of life where ritual plays an important role. The three areas are sports, religion and artistic practice. The exhibit sets out to find the concept of ritual as a faith based activity that only can be validated within certain contexts.

Los Angeles-based and international contemporary artists use a variety of media, including installation, drawings, performance and videos. Artists include Mounira Al Solh, Meris Angioletti, Marcus Coates, Beatrice Catanzaro, Joel Kyack, Lawrence Lemaona, Adrian Paci, Yoshua Okon, Marco Rios, Kara Tanaka, Carlin Wing and Amir Yatziv.

Exhibit co-curator Ciara Ennis will be at the gallery to present a talk about the exhibit on August 24 at 4 p.m., followed by the public reception.

“It is an honor to present this international exhibit. The themes and ideas are important in our time and reflect the manifold ways in which ritual expresses itself in our lives,” said Roger Rowley, Prichard Art Gallery director.

Al Solh’s *The Sea is a Stereo* documents the daily swimming habits of a group of middle-aged Beirut men, who regardless of circumstance—turbulent weather or bombing raids—are compelled to swim in the sea at the same spot every day. With the backdrop of incessant violence and interminable conflict, their rigid swimming ritual becomes an act of defiance in the face of the uncertain and chaotic times and creates unity among them.

Angioletti models her practice on the methodologies and procedures of a detective, psychoanalyst and historian, allowing her to assume a number of different roles and experiment with diverse strategies. The video installation *I describe the way and meanwhile I am proceeding along it* examines the highly influential 19th century abstract painter, mystic and suffragette Hilma af Klint.

The Water was Boiling at 34° 21’ 29’’ S, 18° 28’ 19’’ E, (2008), is a video work which takes the form of an interview between the artist and P.C. Sorcar JR—a celebrated magician in India—about the legendary “vanishing” of the Taj Mahal in Kachipura, Agra, on Nov. 8, 2000. The work explores the possibility of employing magic and illusion to temporarily erase monuments and the narratives that they represent.

Investigating the relationship between shamanism and contemporary art, Marcus Coates’s dramatic and participatory events involve ritualized performances where he attempts to enter into the ‘lower world’ to communicate with spirits of dead animals. *Journey to the Lower World* (2004), documents one such ritual, which he performs wearing antlers and a reindeer pelt for a group of bewildered tenants from a condemned Liverpool housing estate.

Kyack’s ongoing series of performance projects where he records a specific site and community is represented here by *Growing Pains, Leave Stains*, (2011), documenting a performance from Rome, Italy that speaks to the sometimes tumultuous art of childrearing.

Lemaona explores the relationship between sport, spirituality and politics, as well as the roll of the mass media in shaping the psyche in present-day South Africa in *Fortune Teller #5* (2008) and *All Things Fall Apart* (2008). Using textiles employed by local sangomas, the cloth—imbued with great spiritual significance—lends authority to the embroidered text.

As with many of Okon’s works, *Parking Lotus* (2001), an early photographic installation, combines humor with poignant social commentary. Installed floor to ceiling, the photographs depict security guards meditating in lotus positions in various parking lots around Los Angeles. It is accompanied by the “Meditation Movement Manifesto” - a text supporting the spiritual welfare of security guards.

In *Vajtojca*, Paci explores private and public mourning rituals. The video depicts a staging by the artist of his own death in his hometown of Shkoder, Armenia. Employing a professional mourner, Paci is subjected to elaborate

death rites and rituals while laid out on a table in a domestic setting.

Untitled is a large-scale video portrait of the artist with streaming waterfalls tearing from his eyes. The work by Rios reveals his larger preoccupation with psychological and emotional states and the exaggerated use of art historical references.

Tanaka's The Hungry Human is a large sculptural installation depicting representations of sacred mountains found throughout the world, worshipped by pilgrims seeking enlightenment. Reflecting the larger history and conquest of these sacred sites, the work explores spiritual cultivation and the motivation for making grueling pilgrimages.

Wing is an internationally ranked squash player and a widely exhibited photographer, and these roles come together in a series of video and photographic works in Hitting Walls. Her video-loop In the Eye of the Beholder (2009) records the moment when the ball hits either side of the central horizontal line, of the front wall of a squash court, with singular focus and stark economy.

Yatziv's Compressed Ceramic Powder (Battle in the Orchard) (2007) is a video installation featuring a group of young Israeli men solemnly describing their last moments in battle before death. This surreal adherence to the Israeli narrative of martyrdom is disturbed once it is revealed that the soldiers lost a paintball battle, not their lives.

"Synthetic Ritual" is co-curated by Gabi Scardi and Ciara Ennis. The exhibit is organized by Pitzer Art Galleries located on the Pitzer College campus.

This exhibit is free and open to the public. The Prichard Art Gallery hours are: Tuesday-Saturday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.; it is closed on Monday. The gallery, an outreach facility of the University of Idaho, is located at 414/416 S. Main St. on the corner of Fifth and Main streets in downtown Moscow. Additional information is available at www.uidaho.edu/caa/prichardartgallery.

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