

Pio Abad

Artist Statement

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“Pio Abad’s artwork, taking in the form of domestic accessories, glides seamlessly between historical events, enacting quasi-fictional combinations with their leftovers. The resulting hybrid language is a question of interpretation for the present.”

- Catherine Borra, Designs for a New Society (Art Fair Philippines 2014 catalogue)

Oh! Oh! Oh! (A Universal History of Iniquity) was conceived specifically for Market Forces: A Friction of Opposites, a group exhibition at the Osage gallery in Hong Kong concerned with exploring the notion of value in contemporary art. Crucially, the exhibition was held to coincide with the inaugural Art Basel in the city last year. The installation considers two problematic histories of cultural progress within the increasingly hyperactive cultural system emerging in Hong Kong – that of the Philippines and the United Arab Emirates.

The wallpaper print is a repeated image of a chandelier taken from inside the Philippine International Convention Centre, an edifice commissioned for the 1976 World Bank Convention as part of Imelda Marco’s aggressive yet ultimately failed efforts to modernize Manila. This tessellated slice of Philippine history serves as the backdrop to a series of ersatz gold plastic bottles, drenched as much in architectural bathos as the sweet scent of cheap perfume. These supposedly aspirational objects, purchased from street markets in London, are arranged into an impoverished tableau of Middle Eastern progress: a golden camel, followed by a blunt scimitar, a stock Orientalist palace bedecked in plastic rubies, the Burj Al Arab and culminating in the Burj Khalifa rebranded as a perfume called ‘Highest’. In placing these histories alongside each other, I wanted to draw out the complex political, economic and cultural relationships embedded within these seemingly benign domestic objects.