



Korakrit Arunanondchai

2012-2555, 2012

Installation view at MoMA

PS1, New York, 2014

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New York. Photography by

Matthew Septimus

Borna Sammak

"All Dogs Are Pets,"

installation view at JTT, New

York, 2014 . Courtesy the

Artist and JTT, New York

Photography by Charles

Benton

Michael E. Smith

Installation view at The

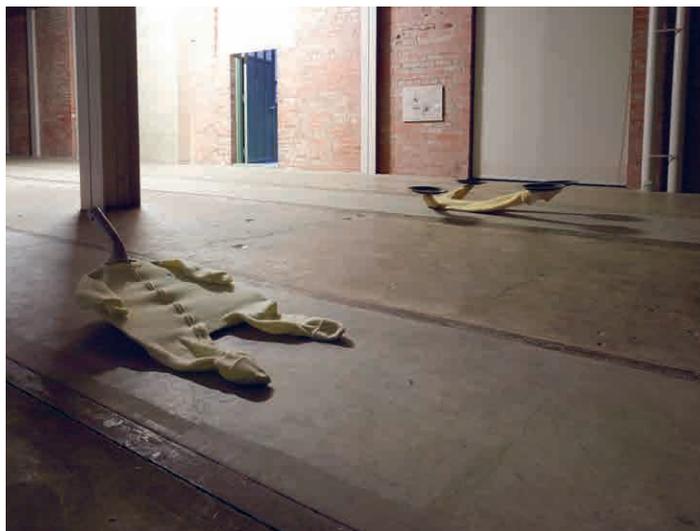
Power Station, Dallas, 2014

Courtesy of the Artist and

The Power Station, Dallas

Photography by Chad

Redmon



Korakrit Arunanondchai

MoMA PS1 / New York

Nestled at the back of the first corridor after entering the main building of MoMA PS1, in a somewhat narrow rectangular room, is the work of Korakrit Arunanondchai — his first museum exhibition in the United States. Arunanondchai was born in Bangkok in 1986 and attended the Rhode Island School of Design and Columbia University. The young artist now occupies a room that recently housed works by the late Mike Kelley (1954–2012) and before that Ed Atkins (British, 1982). If Mike Kelley and Ed Atkins had a love child, it could easily have been Arunanondchai. Not limited to one particular medium, the exhibition features a range of works including fabric beanbag chairs, painted canvases constructed out of denim, metallic paint and collage, and video works. The artist uses a rich, abstract narrative video format to arrive at sculptures and paintings, not unlike the dynamic position embraced by Matthew Barney.

It's as if Arunanondchai takes screenshots of various chapters of his experience. The result is chaotic, colorful and outlandish but also somehow good. The work has a capacity for glamour and glitz, but the use of fire — seen in the burned fabric elements in his stretched canvases — suggests an underlying darkness that at times feels close to breaking through the surface. In the entire exhibition, which also features a live performance, there is one work that stands out, mainly because it almost doesn't belong. In its odd, left-out status, it is the anchor of his approach. Titled *2012–2555* (2012), the piece consists of a performance, a two-channel video, flatscreens, metal, wood, plastic, digital printing on canvas and vinyl, fluorescent lights and plastic flowers. In the foreground is a large canvas piece, layered and shiny from geometric cut-and-pasted silver paper, that is unmistakably based on Raphael's *The School of Athens* (1509–10). This moment of psychedelic recognition confirms that Arunanondchai's complex work not only corresponds with his own esoteric present but with a deeper, art-historical past.

by Katy Hamer

Borna Sammak

JTT / New York

Every evening, after dinner, there is a teenager that wanders the streets of the Lower East Side, craving inspiration, searching for something to do, finding a beautiful skate spot or meeting a friend for a prank. He cannot figure out exactly what he needs deep within himself to fill the void of the life that awaits him, nor can he verbalize what would put an end to his search. So for now he just wants to have fun and crack jokes. Why not be open to wonderment? Is there a place where he could get all this, all these answers in an instant? What if the magic deli does exist, a deli able to deliver anything to anyone? My bet is that this is what Borna Sammak's show at JTT is about. Sammak might have created such a place, where each artwork resonates with the wandering kid's dreams.

The show is meticulously filled with Deli shop signs bearing surrealistic inscriptions, cartoon references, flickering digital compositions, stickers, collages and boardwalk t-shirts. Like his previous double solo show with Alex Da Corte at OKO in New York, Sammak keeps exploring the imagery and codes of the deli world, as if it were the modern Aladdin's cave. The apparent disorder of the show also brings an energetic ring, together with the use of bright, primary colors and the diversity of media used. The messages are blurred and the signs are dismantled as if a bomb had exploded in the neighborhood, mixing the chaotic with the profuse.

"When I first started imagining the show, I thought it was going to be a sculpture show where all the stuff connected like a giant game of Mousetrap. What's that called? A Rube Goldberg machine..." said Sammak. Indeed, there is an attempt to connect, a continuous flimsy line that holds, quite unsteadily, the pieces together. And yet, the impression of playfulness remains.

by Alexandre Stipanovich

Michael E. Smith

The Power Station / Dallas

For his recent show at The Power Station, Michael E. Smith darkened the typically bright industrial space by cancelling all the lights, save one on each of the two floors, which blinked on as bodies moved in and out of the entrances to the building. The effect was caused by an actuator magnet hidden inside empty plastic milk cartons that were hung above the doorways, overturned like the teats of a cow and stuffed full of feathers. The cartons acted like gargoyles at the entrance to a sacred space. Much of Smith's work possesses this alchemical power wherein things are bound and absorbed into hauntingly poetic combinations: dead things come back to life, living things promise to fade, and what is inanimate takes on the countenance of vitality.

In this space, each object described a transaction between materials, sometimes violent, like a basketball encrusted with black rubber and bird parts, or sometimes tender, like a safety harness delicately festooned with hundreds of round oyster shells that jostled in the breeze like a chime.

The image of the harness appeared again in a video piece exhibited through a glass ceiling — a POV shot from a Coast Guard helicopter as it airlifted a stranded sailor from the rough Atlantic. The pace of the film is jumpy and the loop quick, making the narrative of the body's retrieval from danger to safety spin on a rapid cycle. In coincident elegance, with the doors open to the old building on a blustery day, wind came through in gusts, making the wings on a headless pigeon carcass, glued to the handle of a basket, flap as if at once coming back to life and dying all over again. Upstairs, two sets of children's pajamas lay on the ground. One was fortified with a simple wooden armature, forcing the arms and legs of the pajamas upright where plastic plates sat empty, waiting to be filled. The other pajamas were limp but for the torso, which kept the rigid shape of the metal shovelhead that occupied it. The gestures were equally intimate and unnerving, as with all of Smith's work, aligning the rapacious hunger of small bodies to time's inevitable feasting of them.

by Lucia Simek