

woolloomgatta art gallery



© Lugas Syllabus

Nasi Goblok & Raja Kentut

Your Time / My Time

a visual arts cultural exchange travel diary

Nasi Goblok & Raja Kantut

Eric Rossi & Lugas Syllabus – a cross cultural visual Arts Travel Diary

Travel and travel discourse should not be reduced to the relatively recent discourse tradition of literary travel, a narrowed conception which emerged in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. This notion of “travel” was articulated against an emerging ethnography (and other forms of “scientific” field research) on the one hand, and against tourism (a practice incapable of serious knowledge) on the other.

The whole of the journey matters. From planning to unpacking again, handing out gifts at the slide night. During the journey, the smallest of items passes into the realm of the memento. Ticket stubs, wrappers and worn out sarongs become souvenirs; vessels for containment and regeneration of the rich, exciting and often confronting departure from the comfortable and familiar. This is travel. this is the journey that matters; away from oneself in order to reflect back, to return and reclaim with new insight.

Artists Rossi and Syllabus each, in turn, travelled into the other’s world to become immersed in the artists’ life in another culture. Finnish born Australian, Eric Rossi travelled to Jogjakarta, the artisan capital of Indonesia, to eat, sleep and work alongside Syllabus and his team as they installed Syllabus’s largest exhibition to date. Staged at the city’s cultural centre, the opening was a major event and a fantastic experience for Rossi, to be initiated into the inner circle, included and accepted with warmth and humour, typical of the Javanese. In a moment of enthusiasm and excitement, Rossi tried ordering a dish he thought he might have heard of, or tried. In doing so, he earned himself the nickname NASI GOBLOK: The Rice Idiot.



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His paintings show a vivid, disjointed excitement in the experience. ‘In’ jokes and funny stories have become the titles and content of the paintings. On his return to Australia, Rossi indulged himself in reliving the travel experience, painting in his studio night and day in an effort to record every memorable anecdote, every joyous sight and flush of excitement. These are now the motifs in his paintings and have come to represent the small gifts and travel souvenirs brought home and treasured.

Lugas Syllabus arrived in Brisbane from his home on the tropical equator, to experience the season of Spring for the very first time. As an artist in residence in Brisbane’s



© Eric Rossi

Southbank, through the Wandering Room project, he made his art works next door to a florist. The studio was just adjacent to the gardens at South Bank. Daily wandering to the river, the gallery and the shops and cafés in the area, Syllabus experienced a deep seductive pull in the beauty surrounding him. To an artist from the third world, South Bank must surely ooze privilege and wealth. In a time when his traditional culture is being overwritten and rejected

by global trends towards consumerism and commercialism, this must be a bitter/sweet seduction. Syllabus' paintings illustrate a poignant sadness in loss with pleasure gained.

Contemplating these differences and similarities, Syllabus has placed his much repeated figurative representational character of a somewhat undignified black bull (the bull of Sumatra, where Syllabus was born) into the florid and fantastic world of Queensland. He himself became the king to her Queen. In tribute to the slippages of meaning and oft made inappropriate mistakes one makes in another's culture, he adopted the title RAJA KENTUT. The King of Farts is a foolish monarch, who believes that "when the King farts, everyone should smell!"

Cassandra Lehman-Schultz, 2011

Notes:

Clifford, James *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Harvard University Press 1997



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