

## RONALD VENTURA

## *A THOUSAND ISLANDS*



View of the exhibition at Tyler Rollins Fine Art.



*Explorer*, 2011, oil on canvas, 48 x 36 in. (122 x 91.4 cm)

It is with great pleasure that we welcome back Ronald Ventura for his second solo exhibition, *A Thousand Islands*, at Tyler Rollins Fine Art. One of the most highly acclaimed contemporary artists from the Philippines, Ventura has garnered enormous international attention in recent years, and he now ranks among the leading artists of his generation in Southeast Asia. His work was first introduced in the United States with a solo exhibition, *Metaphysics of Skin* (2008), at our New York gallery, in which Ventura explored the expressive possibilities of the surface of the human body, the skin. Making use of a dynamic mix of imagery and styles ranging from cartoons to graffiti, tattoo design, Old Master drawings, and antique anatomical prints, Ventura reflected on the way individual and group identities are constructed, with particular reference to the cultural hybridity of the Philippines.

In the two years since that exhibition, Ventura has been very active on the international scene. He participated in the Prague (2009) and Nanjing (2010) biennales and presented a large body of work for the two-person exhibition, *A Duad in Play* (2010), at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, in addition to solo exhibitions in Europe and Asia. His work will also be featured in the group exhibition, *Surreal Versus Surrealism in Contemporary Art*, opening in late 2011 at the Institut Valencià d'Art Modern.

For *A Thousand Islands*, Ventura exhibits a new series of closely related paintings and sculptures that focus on the motif of floating islands. Inspired by the geography of the Philippines, with its over seven thousand islands, and incorporating forms that allude to both Surrealism and contemporary science fiction, Ventura creates complex, multi-layered compositions that evoke dystopic fantasy worlds. The painted surfaces are gradually built up through a rich layering of superimposed images taken from an eclectic range of sources that exemplify the multifaceted identity of the Philippines, with its centuries of colonial rule by Spain and then the United States, along with the underlying indigenous cultures. The floating, rocky islands that form the central motif of the paintings come to three-dimensional life in the unique, fiberglass resin sculptures, with their rough, craggy masses surmounted by architectural constructions that call to mind the rampant development taking place in the Philippines' many beachfront resorts. Ventura contends with the popular notion of the country as an island paradise, pointing out darker undertones that lurk just beneath the surface. At times somber and playful, these works grapple with psychological motivations and repressed memories, personal fantasies and mass delusions, nightmares and revelations, commenting on contemporary life through the prism of a deeply personal vision.

**EXHIBITION DATES:** September 8 – October 22, 2011

**GALLERY HOURS:** Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am – 6 pm