Keep Calm & Shop Til Drop – D.P Arsa

D.P Arsa is one Indonesian contemporary photographer who is bored of seeing the ubiquitous, glossy images of Bali and uses photography as a medium to communicate ideas that are close to his heart. “I have no wish to portray the stereo typical beauty we so often see, the traditional dancer, sunset, beach or the tropical landscape vista. I want to use photography to inspire people to think big, and to think outside of the box,” he says.

Arsa’s exhibition, “Keep Calm & Shop Til Drop” open from 13th June until 30th July at the Griya Santrian Gallery in Sanur, combines photographic images in 2 dimensions and 3 D installation works that are aesthetically strong, thought provoking, and a poignant reminder of the obsessive nature of the human character. Under investigation by Arsa in the exhibition is the modern cultural phenomenon of consumerism.

Consumerism and materialism are major fundamentals of western capitalist culture and economies, however emerging economies, such as Indonesia have only recently experienced an increasing supply of circulating capital, greater class mobility and wider access to local and foreign consumer goods for the masses. Arsa, however, believes that consumerism and materialism is detrimental to the human character and comes at the cost of traditional culture and self-identity.

Product and company branding, shopping bags, receipts, and bar codes are utilized by Arsa throughout the exhibition, juxtaposed along side images of modernity and tradition. These symbols of consumerism, play an ever-present role in our lives in a world that is increasingly becoming image and brand orientated.

Advertising and marketing strategies saturate our consumer culture, visually and even infiltrate our language and the values of the modern corporate driven world are eroding the virtues of traditional societies. Emphasizing the cost efficiency and ease of traditional versus modern sales methods Arsa’s work, “Fucking Shit With Your Marketing Theory” superimposes an photograph of a traditional Indonesian travelling sales man with his bicycle loaded with house appliances and items against a background of shopping receipts. The salesman casually gestures in opposition to the need for an alternative marketing strategy.

This traditional model that does not rely on hi-tech or manipulative words to influence the buyer, but a no frills methods of direct marketing without the buyers needing to venture from the home. Arsa suggests that online shopping at home via the internet and “pilgrimages” to shopping malls are non essentials.

“Are You Happy?”, a color photographic image depicts an anonymous figure, standing side on, arms folded, with a ‘Hello Kitty’ shopping bag upon their head. The import brand quickly became an icon of global consumerism fulfilling secondary needs while consumers identities become driven by brand association. Does the material world nourish the human spirit?

The increasing desire for imported products and prestige brands is a form of neo colonialism that is a threat to the wealth and diversity of Indonesian traditional culture. As human identity shifts from the association of traditional cultural norms to modern consumer icons values change and patterns of greed, egoism, elitism, competition, addiction and psychosis become apparent in our behavior.

Born in Klaten-Central Java, 1971 and a graduate from the Udyana University Denpasar with a degree in Archaeology, “Keep Calm & Shop Til Drop” introduces important ‘food for thought’ to the public forum and Arsa must be highly commended for this exhibition.
Are You Happy?

Gun Behind Shopping

fuck'in shit ! with your marketing theory