

Bresson as people walking in the vast open space are framed by a dagger of angled sunlight and a pale gray pentagon (reflection from Shamir's camera lens) sited in the photograph's exact center that frames a child waving furiously at, what must be, her parents. This image is, as Lincoln Kirstein once said, "...the X that marks the spot where time and space cross in a potential explosion."

One is neither amused nor told a story by Bleier's photographs. They require the viewer to stand at attention and take notice of each individual bovine organ as it is hung on a hook and photographed on a white tiled field; except for a recent series she calls *Garden of Organs* in which several organs are shot on either a dense black background or an exotic panel of decorative floral patterns. Smaller and organized in groups the subjects continue to be hung by thin strings yet become more literal than conceptual; they have more meaning in their still life arrangement.

When confronted with the details of Bleier's images, a strange difference falls upon the viewer—having been exposed to the obvious verisimilitude of oxen carcasses in fantastic paintings by Rembrandt and Soutine—no blood, no bits and pieces of cartilage, and extraneous pieces of flesh and no expressive lighting. By taking her subject out of context and removing the natural object from its formal environment she has transformed the living volume, its textures and its colors into something bizarre, something grotesquely beautiful.

The fact that the life-size organs hang from polished stainless-steel hooks, recalling the slaughterhouse and the butcher shop, the images, as Haikin points out, "have been reformulated in minimalist fashion."

On the philosophical level, Haikin introduces a concept of power and rescue. By entering a slaughterhouse, a venue controlled by men, and by removing passive body parts from their normal locale, Bleier is virtually attacking the masculinity inherent in the act

of preparing food for market. Haikin sees it "...as a feminine act of extrication and rescue."

Angel (2009), a trio of life-size prints of a nude couple embracing in a prone position on a rich Oriental carpet and photographed from above, is augmented by the work *Self Portrait, The Hanged Woman* (2006–2007). The latter is a remarkable way to portray oneself—hanging upside down from fabric tongs tied to each foot with hair and hands dangling in space. Bleier has photographed in faultless skin tones her back placed in perfect symmetry against a red floral wall-covering and an Oriental carpet. The addition of a simple standing lamp with bright yellow shade provides the photograph with an alternative subject, an undemanding, immobile domestic accessory symbolizing residence. But at the core of her faceless self-portrait, Bleier has positioned herself as just another carcass, swinging in the wind, waiting for the slaughterer.

Gil Goldfine

MALAYSIA

Kuala Lumpur

Roslisham Ismail at 15, Jalan Mesui

Audiences are voyeurs. So, what happens when the visual stimulus is removed? *Ghost*, Roslisham Ismail's (aka Ise), 37, recent solo exhibition, curated by Eva McGovern and Vincent Leong, posed that question.

Invited to a disused spot in the heart of the city, audiences were greeted by speakers and gilt frames suspended from the ceiling or placed phantom-like on the wall. They signified the presence of Ismail's original artworks—ten collage/drawings produced during a spell of insomnia. The only trace of the originals was to be found in his recordings of overlapping voices punctuated by ambient sound. The exhibition team had said, "No drawings will be on

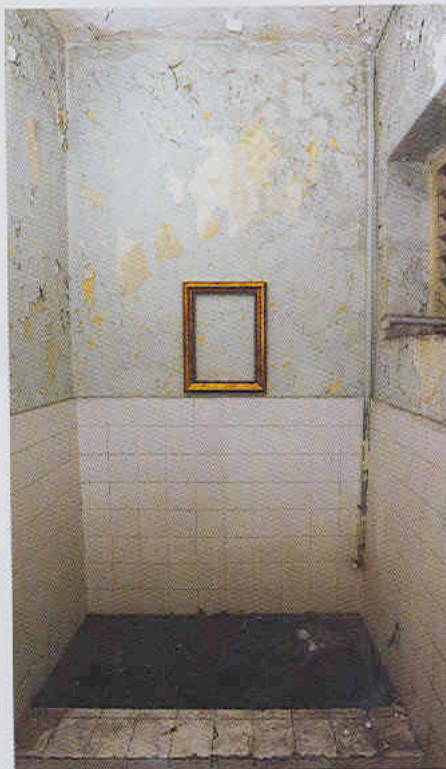
display" by the artist.

Ismail's entry into the Malaysian art scene was with a video and performance, a rebuff of the 2004 Young Contemporaries Competition, calling into question the competition's unyielding requirement of a 3 x 3 x 3 meter size.

Provocation is also present in *Ghost*. The absence of Ismail's original artworks functions within similar parameters to that found in John Cage's four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence or Gavin Turk's provocative 1991 MA show at London's Royal College of Art, which consisted only of a commemorative plaque with his details.

With sound as the primary medium, *Ghost* challenges the bulwark definition of art in Malaysia, a nation that is highly dependent on visual impact; Kuala Lumpur is home to the Petronas Twin Towers, the world's tallest building between 1998 and 2004. But paintings still dominate the local art scene both through exhibitions and sales.

By using the voices of multiple groups of people from inside and outside the Malaysian art world, the artworks lose Ismail's original voice. This would have sat well with the late Roland Barthes (1915–1980), who famously called for the 'Death of the Author,' and for the reader, viewer, or listener to



Roslisham Ismail, *Ghost*, 2010, mixed-media sound installation, dimensions variable. Photographs by Magnus Azami.

be an active participant in the unfolding of a work.

In *Ghost*, the charm lies in listening to how others have described Ismail's art. Children gave honest single-word answers and giggled at what they saw. Adults offered wordy interpretations of each piece. Their words—descriptive or analytical—were a springboard to interpret Ismail's art for oneself, stimulate imagination, and, finally, cause one to wonder if viewing Ismail's original artworks mattered at all.

I spent a lot of time listening to each recording at *Ghost*, much longer than I might have done with paintings or sculptures. And I enjoyed the experience of being away from the more orthodox exhibition spaces.

Rachel Jenagaratnam

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THAILAND

Bangkok

Imhathai Suwatthanasilp at Ardel Gallery of Modern Art

Hair as a genetic material with intimate associations has a long history as an arts-and-crafts medium. During 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and America, the use of hair in the art of jewelry and ornamental object production was widely popular. In terms of Asian contemporary art, Chinese artist Gu Wenda used 420 pounds of human hair in his 2007 installation *United Nations: The Green House* (*United Nations* is Gu's ongoing global art project since 1993 and over two million people worldwide have donated their hair to this project so far, according to the artist) while Thai artist Sakarin Krue-on incorporated 10,000 locks of hair of Chinese origin for his 2007 wall hanging entitled *Since 1958*, which was a commentary on China's exploitation of its workforce.

The hair creations of young female artist Imhathai Suwatthanasilp have recently sparked curiosity among Bangkok art audiences. For