



## About the Artist Julius Poncelet Manapul

Julius Poncelet Manapul was born in Manila, Philippines in 1980 and immigrated to Toronto, Canada in 1990. He attained his Bachelors of Fine Arts in 2009 from the Ontario College of Art and Design University. He completed a one-year residency in Paris, France from 209-2010 and earned a Professional Art Studio certificate from the Toronto School of Art in 2010-2011. Julius completed his Masters of Visual Studies at University of Toronto in 2013, along with his Sexual Diversity Studies Certificate from University of Toronto. His work had been presented at UTAC Gallery (2013), Open Gallery, Propeller Gallery, P/M Gallery (2014), Daniel Spectrum (2013), The Paradise Now Collective curated by Rae Johnson, The Rivoli's "Fashion Art Fusion Show" performance part of the Paradise Now events (2011), Nuit Blanche-Toronto (2010, 2012 and 2014), Toronto World Pride Affiliated Art Event (2014), BAAF Big Alternative Art, Festival Participation Projects curated by Carla Garnet (2014), and had shown works in Toronto-Canada, London-UK, Paris-France and Berlin-Germany.

His work addresses themes of post-colonialism, immigration, diaspora, sexual identity, and identity construction. His work focuses on personal hybrid nature of Filipino culture and queer identity. These hybrid images reflect his identity in a queer community that upholds homonormativity. His experience is a personal journey informed by religion, queer culture, and the postcolonial issues as they relate to queer identity and is a reflection of his experience of immigration and transformation. Looking at the reality for many diasporic queers of color to creates a space of my own crafted domestic shrines of queerness that begs the questions: What is sacred? What is worshiped or held up as perfect? What is masculine? Who decides? and who has the power?

### INTRODUCTION:

As an artist I construct hybrid representation of Gods and Idols by using pornography and images of half-naked (pin-up) white male bodies. I overlay these images with intricate designs and mixed representations of Gods from around the world but particularly focus on my own Catholic upbringing. In my art I place religious and regal imagery over each other. These images beg the questions: What is sacred and what is profane? What do we worship or what do we hold up as perfect? What is masculine? Who decides these things? And who has the power to do so?

My art is influenced by many factors: attitude of religious institutions towards gay culture, the superficiality of popular queer identity culture, race politics, gender performance, icons, sex and pornography. These issues have affected and transformed my life in my attempt to survive the conventions and control of religion, hetronormotivity and homonormonormtivity, and racism in western society.



Hybrid God, Julius in costume, from the Paradise Now Fashion Art Fusion, The Rivoli, 2011.

"I explore the fragile material of gay magazines for my drawn collaged work, transforming the images into appropriated childhood fantasy & homoerotic forms while commenting on postcolonial issues. I trace my drawn images by cutting and removing each traces of marked lines. The questons I ask and the answers I seek are very much about what it means to be whole, liberated, self-empowered and embodied as a gay Filipino man in a western, highly commercialized Heteronormative & Homonormative society. At the same time failing to find my own identity in a queer community that upholds the typical middle class, gay white male as perfection of queer identity - homonormative."

-Julius Poncelet Manapul

### Hybrid Paper Gods & Queens

The ideas in my art are a way of deconstructing my values, exploring new perspectives, and creating a personal queer religion. I choose gay porn as my primary material because it allows me to deconstruct ideas of masculinity, race, gender and beauty. Gay pornography boldly exposes the sensuality of the male sex, the ideology of masculinity that I choose to break it down resulting in the ultra androgynous forms in my work. By rearranging the semiotics of the male bodies and what it represents, the signs and their meanings in the conventions of sexuality are reconstructed.

I explore Post-Modern Gods in today's society, exploring the fashion models, homonormative culture, and celebrity culture that are placed on altars to be adorned. Ideas of power and perfection that our culture embraces manifest into our new "Post - Modern Gods" in the "New Idol Culture". As they say, "America will vote for the next Idol" while I explore my idea of the Gay Gaze that spills through the cracks of these conventions.

I construct brand name purses from gay magazines and use the male skin parts to create the logo patterns. Here I relate commodity, obsession, compulsivity & fetishism of the brand names and male bodies that are used to sell the perfect "Ken" doll image of the ideal Northern American man; manufacturing the utopian image. We buy not only the physicality and tangible objects we hold as commodities but also the intangible ideas and thoughts that we buy into to dress up our lives. As I walk through The Village in Toronto I watch the homonormative groups with their brand name man-purse or so called "murse" to obtain status, obsessing to be part of the commodity of Plastic Gods, surrendering to the corporate objects.

I choose the historical influence of Gods, Deities, and Queens making a contemporary link towards male models, celebrity billboards, screens and the the male God like statues and shrines of the old world. As I gathered and reorganized the documented ideas of these male bodies, shadows of new gods emerge as well as shadows of the "other", the indigenous that the Eurocentric imperialism tamed and clothed. During the colonization in the Philippines, the Spanish were confronted by the tribal people of Visayas. The natives adorned their naked bodies with tribal tattooing; symbolizing rank and accomplishments and believed to have magical qualities. The idea of fully covering ones body with clothes was introduced by the European's as one of the means of taming the wild. What is this idea of the wild and the primitive? Literary Theorist Edward Said says in his book Orientalism: "European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a Sort of surrogate and even underground self (Said, 3)." Similarly Spanish culture set itself up as the mirror image to the wild natives that they sort to tame.



**Murse**, Sculpted from Gay Magazine and Gay Porn Magazine, 2012.

By cutting adornments on the naked body of the masculine white males from gay porn magazines I have turned the table around by taming the power dynamics of the white man - the ideal gay beauty that embodies homonormotivity. My idea to construct the new hybrid creation of the male bodies and overlaying them with intricate images and mixed representations of Gods from around the world with the focus on Catholicism in the Philippines. Religious and regal images are placed one over the other, creating an alternate new visual language.

Through these works I bring different time periods together. This idea was explored and developed while I resided in Paris (2009-2010), a city where history and present culture co-exist side by side with heightened hybrid aesthetics. In Jonathan Harris' book on Hybridity, Hegmony, Historicism he says:

"Hybridity in art and cultural development, then, also has a powerful historical embodiment in the socio-political operations of imperialism and in the formation of a postcolonial society. In an abstract sense hegemony nominates the processes of exchange and interchange that develop between differentially powerful groups—the 'leaders and led'— and for this reason it is not surprising that the concept has been applied widely to many kinds of social relationship, including those between men and women, black and white, the colonizer and the colonized."

(Harris, 23)

Here, Harris talks about the complicated relationship of influence in art and culture that is a product of imperialism and power. To take away from this, it is the ancient culture, now sitting in museums just as ancient artifacts, or the tattoos of a Samoan warrior, now on a Californian surfer. By placing intricate images of ancient Gods over modern magazines, I want to draw attention to the different religious and cultural institutions that have transformed our ideas of gender and values over time. Colonization and race play a large part in this, as the models in these magazines (the predominant images) are often masculine white males and the images of Gods are often appropriated cultural symbols. Besides folding and sculpting paper, I also use the ancient art of Chinese paper cutting as a technique when putting these images together as another layer to the work. Chinese paper cutting is a tradition passed down from mother to daughter. Here, as a man participating in a traditionally female activity, I again refashion a prescribed gender role to create something new. Cultural representation within the queer community and advertising becomes important in my work. Logos and labels can be found as additional patterns that play important cues of globalization in the modern affects of North American and European values. These Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Nike, Prada worlds creates a fetish brand that carries similar co-modifications and the ritual fetishism to those found in gay pornography and religious practice.



### The Brown Gaze / Color Gaze

Different religious and cultural institutions have transformed our ideas of gender values over time. Colonization and race play a large part in this. Besides folding and sculpting paper I also mix cut outs of conventional religious and primitive adornments on gay porn images of naked hyper masculine white males. This is to eroticize them through my eyes. I wanted to redirect the viewer's perception of the exotification of minorities towards the colonizer. The Male Gaze is a Eurocentric view of the world, while the Gay Gaze is Homonoromative in it's view. I simply wanted to rearrange these conventional concepts into the Brown Gaze/Colored Gaze and see things through my own eyes rather than what was taught to me.

As a child in the Philippines I remember my first time seeing a Caucasian boy, I was interested and infatuated with how different he was from me and what I grew up with as conventional. Recollecting feelings as if I just saw a White Unicorn or something equivalent to the uncommon.

By cutting out adornment I create a sense of tattooing on the body and an act of domesticating these exotic white males through my own rules as I dress them up with my own creation of hybrid attire, just as the colonizers domesticated and introduced clothing to the naked indigenous people of the lands they have ravaged. This conventional views of the other and the exotic can interchange depending on what side of the mirror you are looking into; the other realm of power struggle between the colonized and the colonizer. I never really saw my self as the exotic Filipino East Asian Queer Boy that Rice Queens often perceived me as with their gaze. By having my childhood experience in the Philippines and my adolescence in Canada I often remember the early experiences of my interactions with the white kids, as a child I found them fascinating and would just stare at them for a long period of time, realizing later that my actions and infatuations towards Caucasian boys was an act of exoticization of what was different from me. These views of the other and the exotic can interchange depending on what side of the mirror you may be looking into. North American and Eurocentric theories usually back up the conventional views of the exotic and the "Other". What about the other side?

As much as ideas of gender roles and sexuality have influenced my work, so have experiences of racism and historical colonization. When I immigrated to Canada from the Philippines at the age of 9 I felt alienated and mocked for the way I looked, poor English, and cultural habits; my way of being was seen as primitive to the western concepts. I was not supposed to eat rice with my hands or squat on the floor, I needed to be tamed as the Spaniards did to the natives in the Philippines. Again, I was faced with a set of boundaries and rules of behavior. Growing up in Canada as an adolescent exploring the queer communities for the first time, I experienced a great deal of racism and a sense that I was the 'other', years later when I visited the Philippines again I became the other as well. Feeling like I did not belong to either two Countries, I have embodied this hybrid form of new alternate culture without land. This is a feeling of Racial Melancholia as told by David L. Eng in his book The Feeling of Kinship where he explores the lack of belonging, the feeling of being sad with the loss of one's heritage, yet not knowing what was lost at the same time. This ask the questions where do I fit in and how can I belong other than "white-washing" my self for survival and opportunity? The other awakening question is why do I need to fit in to a category of always knowing rather than unknowing? My artwork now asks the question, who is exotified within the constructed fantasy between utopian difference and belonging. I wanted to construct my own utopian fantasy of belonging that may not exist in the tangible concept of reality but exist in the mind, memory, dreams, the experience of otherness, and the feeling of kinship that exist with all the people going through Racial Melancholia.

Within mainstream gay culture the representation of the perfect man is a gay, white, masculine Homonormative male. This dominates the queer culture as the ideal image that is placed up on a pedestal. He is sold to us through the media and presented in popular culture, in TV Shows like Queer as Folk to Will & Grace, advertisements by Calvin Klein, queer fashion magazines, gay porn magazines and even artworks such as the works of Tom of Finland who uses sexually charged iconic images of gay men performing hyper masculinity much like bands like The Village People.

Experiencing racism within the queer community creates a double layer of isolation and alienation. On one hand there is the racism and isolation, and on the other there is exotification. If one analyzes the gay club scene or queer dating websites there is an alarming amount of queer males ISO (in search of) a SWM (single white male)! Must be butch! Or must be top! Or on the other hand a gay Asian man gets exotified as submissive and the white male that desires an Asian man is labeled a 'Rice Queen.' These exotic longings are mocked within queer culture, and the racist colonial value's infiltrates the queer community.

The issues of race in queer representations play a big part in my art work. In the book "The Feeling of Kinship, Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy" David L. Eng talks about the problematic side of "Colorblindness" with transnational adoptee, turning a blind eye to avoid political scrutiny of racist issues, expanding the idea of a globalized melting pot and the dynamics of the new culture of the "white - washed" minorities. Another book that tackles the same idea is "Cruising Utopia, The Then and There of Queer Futurity" by José Esteban Muñoz who talks about attaining utopia that is always in the future horizon which can never be attained in the present. Muñoz questions the lack of validation with the existence of queer minorities in conventional academic theories with works like Lee Edelman's "No Future, Queer Theory and the Death Drive" which only see a narrow view of queer communities with the middle class white privileged queer individuals: The "Ken Dolls" of queer ideological perceptions. Muñoz on the other hand talks about the idea of the alternate in his introduction of "Cruising Utopia". This alternate utopia tries to replace the conventions we are forced to inhabit in our culture.

My work, being a very personal exploration, may seem like a vanity project, and here I turn to the story of Narcissus that is the ultimate tale of the Gay Gaze. Scholar Victor I. Stoichita analyses the story of Narcissus, in his book A Short History of the Shadow. Narcissus' story is the drama of his love & attraction towards his reflection that he thinks is another man. As he stares at his reflection he says:

"He himself is eager to be embraced. For, often with upturned face he strives to lift his lips to mine. You would think he could be touched – so small a thing it is that separates our loving hearts.

Whoever you are, come forth hither! Why, O peerless youth, do you elude me?

Or whiter do you go when I strive to reach you?"

Narcissus believed that the image was another man but as he discovers the truth it soon ends in tragedy. "Oh, I am he! I have felt it, and know my own image. I burn with love of my own self; I both kindle the flames and suffer them. What shall I do?" (Stoichita, 34) Narcissus' story is the story of one man's desire for another man as well as being a tale about vanity. It is a fitting tale because much of my art is about vanity and the male body, and about gazing in as well as out at the world.

The gaze I focus most on is what I call the Gay Gaze. The Gay Gaze, which is another side of the Male Gaze, is no longer about the longing between a man and a woman but between man and man. The Gay Gaze dominates queer images that can be found in advertising, magazines, film, and other images circulated within the gay community. The male that poses for the male viewer is aware that he is the subject of homoerotic pleasure. This creates a new dynamic of who is doing the looking, which now creates the male subject matter and the male viewer. Here we see a certain kind of gaze with its complexities of looking at ones self but also the looking at another man, much like Narcissus and his reflection leading us to the tale of the homoerotic gaze that ends in tragedy. And much like Narcissus and his desire for an unattainable shadow, the ideal Homonortmative is manufactured and sold through gay porn, adverting, and mainstream media which is as much unattainable as Narcissus' reflection; a false religion, with false gods, simply selling sex, vanity and racialized values of beauty. The terminology of The Gay Gaze can be further deconstructed and questioned by the proposition of The Gay Brown Gaze, which I constantly explore in my artwork. To show how I exoticize and view the white male bodies and create a reflected image between them and myself and the switch roles, as much as they had exoticized my cultural identity..



Shooting Blanks Series, Wall Installation, Gay Magazine Cut-outs, 2002.

### The Unattainable Queertopian Fantasy

In my work I crafted my own religion that is a reflection of my world like the story of Narcissus. My installations and performances explore the idea of the Post-Modern Gods in today's society and how we place icons of models and celebrities on altar's to be adorned. The idea of power and perfection that our culture embraces which manifest into our new "Post-Modern Gods" in the age of our "New Idol Culture" is questioned in my work. The effects of religion and post colonialism to queer identity are paramount in understanding the queer community and the repression it creates. It is through the re-creation and execution of new religion and culture that I focus on hybrid manufactured Gods, altars, and shrines of homoerotic beauty. Only existing in my alternate reality that I have created since childhood, still wishing to wake up to a new fantasy where religious beliefs, cultural differences, and queer communities can belong. I consume these images, digest the materials and regurgitate them, to create new hybrid forms.

It is my childhood experiences and adolescent years of questioning my sexuality and masculinity and how they are accepted and rejected in society that heavily informs my work. I cut to create these drawn images. I explore gay magazines and pornographies for my collages, transforming the images into heavenly altars and shrines of homoerotic beauty. In the act of cutting, I create religious and regal patterns from the male forms revealing and concealing the male body at the same time.

The only way to escape the confinement of Religious practice and social norms as a boy was to focus on an alternate reality. I remember trading my action figures for my sister's Barbies and using my mother's shoebox to transform a toy truck I got for Christmas into a parade float for her. At an early age I learned to alter and transform my imaginary world to fit my needs against what the religious convention and social norm expected of me. As I grew older, fashion magazines and sexuality captured my attention. These four things; religion, the refashioning of gender prescribed roles, fashion, and sexuality have had a big influence in my life and are recurring themes in my work.

My crafted Hybrid Gods stem from my childhood to the adulthood experiences of struggle that I had faced through unattainable fantasy. They represent an alternative world where I can belong to without any restrictions. A new breed of what is held up as the Sacred and the Profane at the same time, unbound by conventions and control. This new Utopian Hybrid manufactured fantasy can only exist in the mind or as an idea. We all have different perceptions, taste, and values, so our idea of the Utopia can never manifest due to constraining obstacles that we place with each other. Theorist Giorgio Agamben simultaneously envisions the contemporary as the darkness and the light creating the in between. To see darkness is to know the presence of light and to see light is to know the presence of darkness, it is this middle ground and the in between that creates the present. My interest lies in this thin line of knowing and unknowing, being in the present and the unattainable Utopian future we can never touch. Dare to dream of the alternative from the conventions of religion, gender, race, fairy tales, capital power, commodity and everything in between. What I have found coming all the way here was fear and isolation to cloister my self in my own shadows. It is to live among others, which awakens my own existence; it is this act and mental gathering that is a big challenge in life. It is also the only thing that we all want before we disappear and walk alone towards death again.



Julius Poncelet Manapul



# Daper Tods & Queens

### Julius Poncelet Manapul

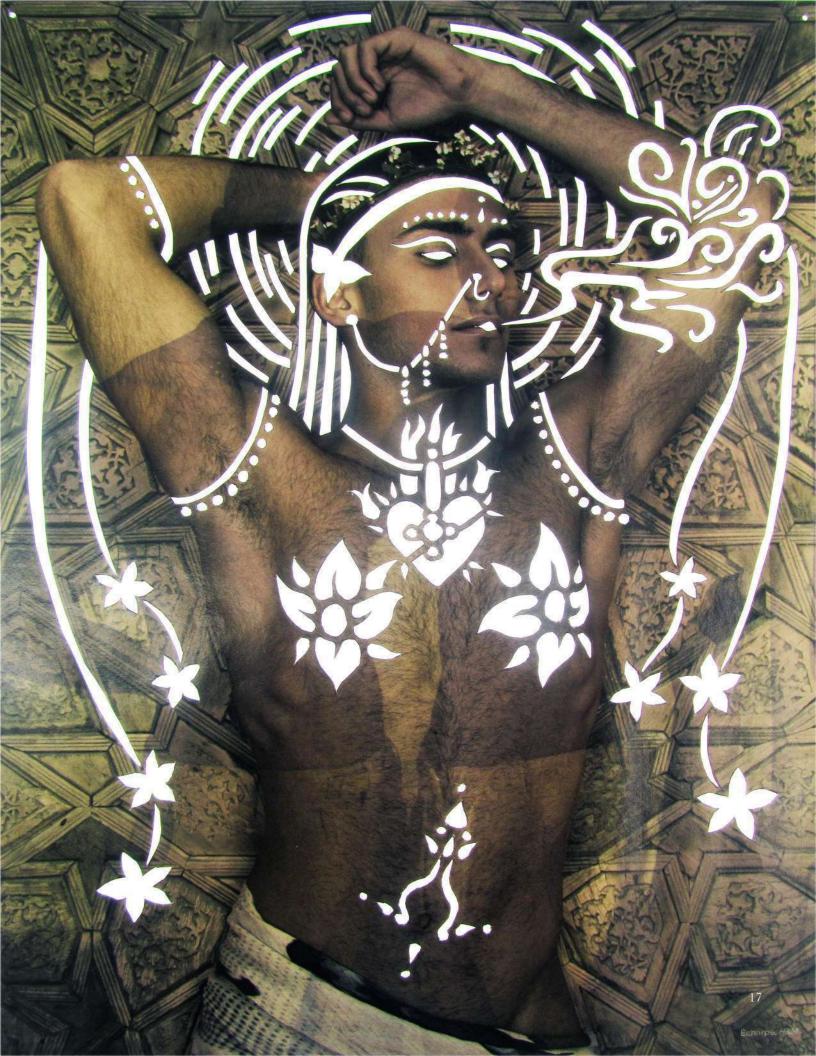
Cut-outs from Gay Magazines Size of 8.5 x 11 inches, 21.6 x 28 cm, 2009-2011.

These series of work was started while living in Paris, France for one year with my husband from 2009-2010. I wanted to create intricate works that was compact and transportable with materials that was easily accessible, so I started going through my husbands collections of French Gay Magazines. This became my main medium filtering through Queer Imaginaries in Parisian Culture! The cut-outs are informed by mixing different Religious symbols into a hybrid forms. These paper Gods & Queens challenge the homonormative representation of the Queer Male Iconographies, hinting on deep desires, rituals and commoditized ideas of the sacred alter egos. There are visual cues on gender play, performance and transformations within these series of work. I was inspired and influenced while surrounded by historical aesthetics blended with technological contemporaries, resulting in hybridity to the city of lights, which is called Paris.













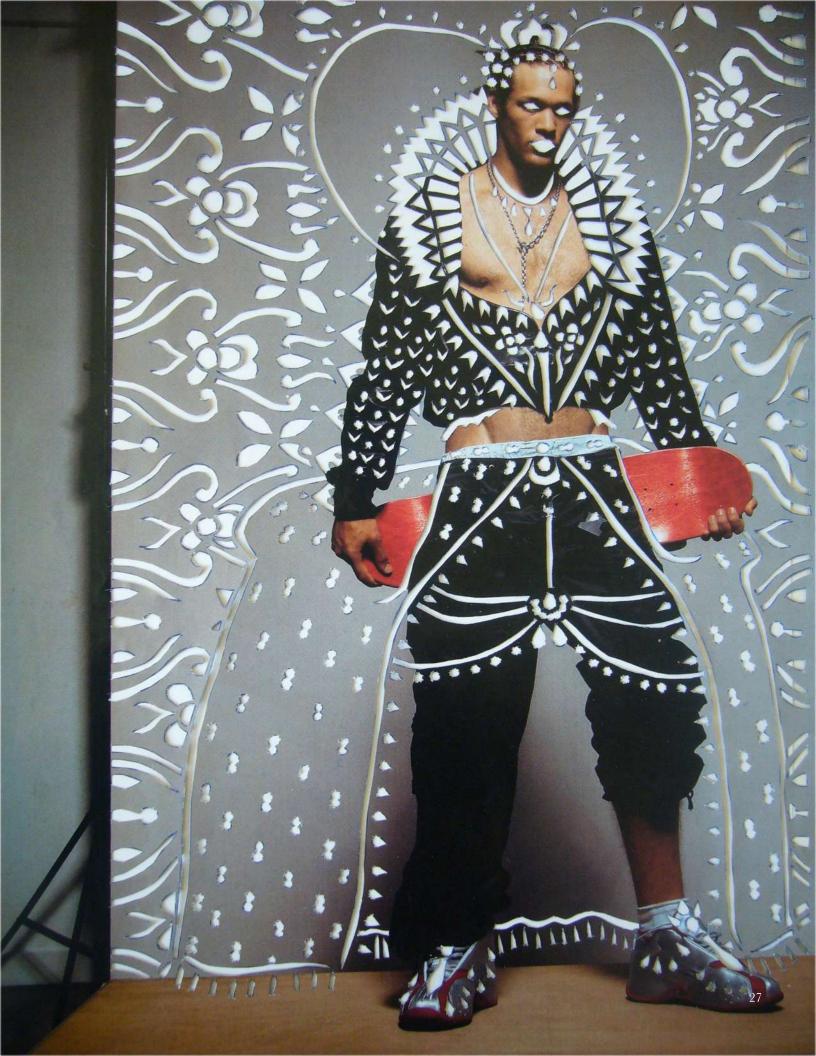


























Details, *Paper Gods & Queens*, Cut-out Series, 2009-2011.





Paper Gods & Queens, Gay Magazine, Cut-out Series, 2009-2011.

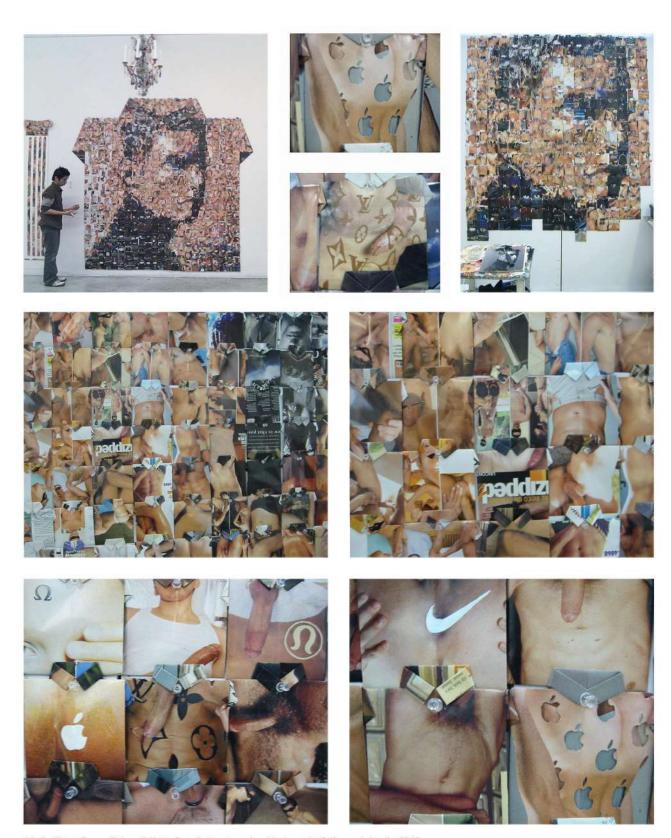




#### Julius Poncelet Manapul

Crafted Pixels and Origami from Gay Porn Magazines and Gay Lifestyle Magazines, Constructions, 2008-2013.

Constructing on the abundance and reproduced qualities of these magazines parallels the technological repetitons of pixels and digital accessability. Through consumer-culture we learn the cluttered values and beliefs, pushing the notion that if we buy these objects and beliefs we will be better and happier than before. We seem to be bound by these magazine culture and the societies are dependant on them to thrive and function. Gay porn magazines are the predominant choice for my materials because they explore another side of consumerism and commodity. Sexual identity and commodity had been highly appropriated by the queer community from Bathhouses, Porn to Grindr it has imbedded itself within Queer Culture. *Male Shirt:* The shirt's main purpose is to conceal the naked form; I had constructed it in a manner that exposes the naked form in its bare, voyeuristic vision. The cutouts and painted logos on the flesh of the nude men images lures us to the commoditization sexual rituals. Using these sexual forms as my manufactured pixels the viewer is blinded to the pornographic images from afar. There are two readings that are presented here, two points of view: first, the up close and personal images of the ready-made desires of consumption and pleasure while the second view is the distant image of a male homonormative portrait.



Male Shirt, Paper Origami Shirts Installation to scale with the artist Julius and details, 2009.

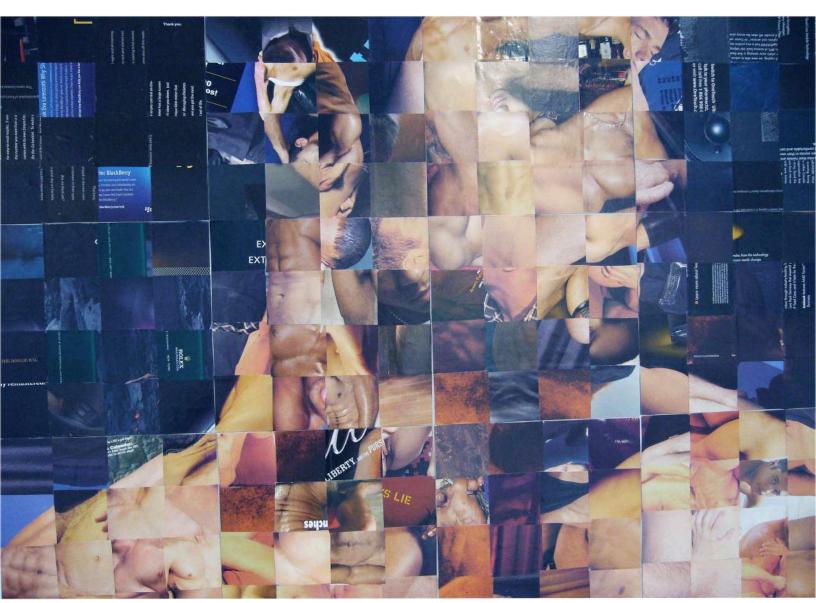


 $\textbf{\textit{Male Shirt}, Paper Origami \bar{S}hirts Installation from Gay Porn Magazine}, 96 \times 96 \text{ inches}, 243.84 \times 243.84 \text{ cm}, 2009.$ 

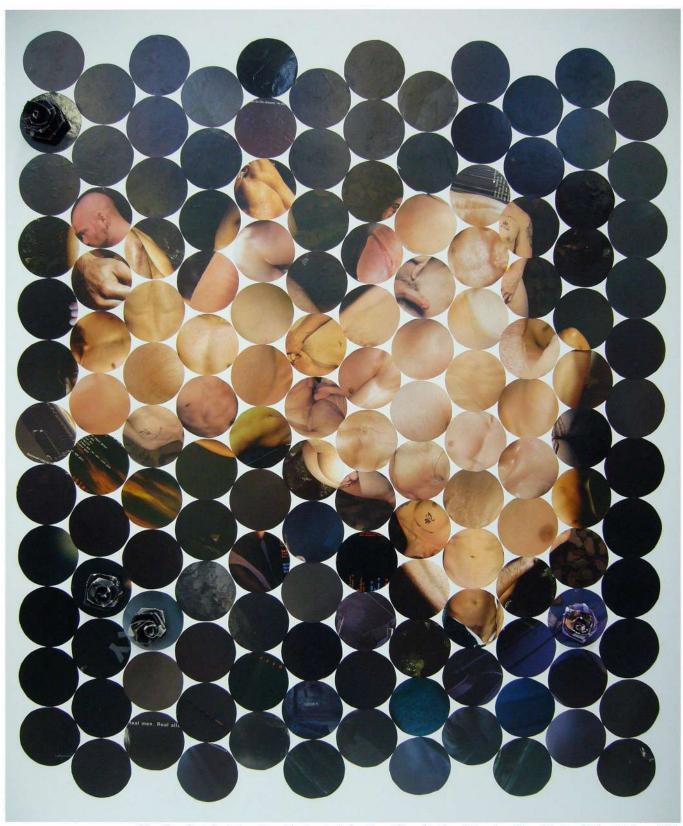




Details, *Male Shirt*, Paper Origami Shirts Installation from Gay Porn Magazine, 96 x 96 inches, 243.84 x 243.84 cm, 2009.

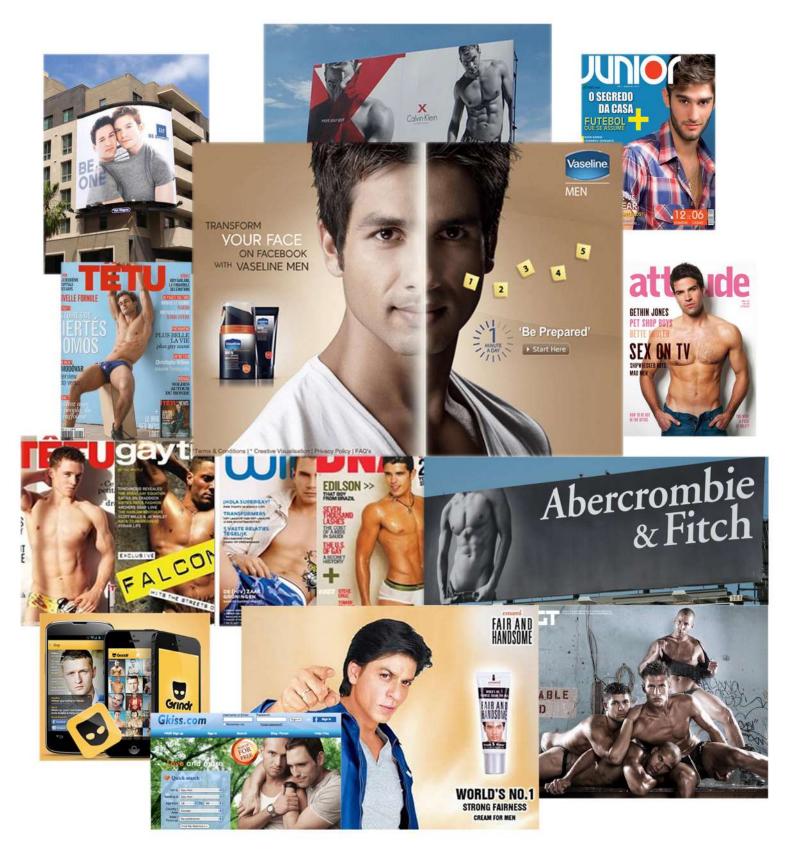


 $\pmb{Nude\ Male},$  Collaged pixelation from Gay Magazines, 25 x 33 inches, 63.5 x 83.8 cm, 2009.



The Kiss, Portrait of the artist and husband, circle collaged from Gay Porn Magazines, 35 x 45 inches, 88.9 x 114.3 cm, 2009.

### The Problematic Effects of HOMONORMATIVITY & WHITEWASHING

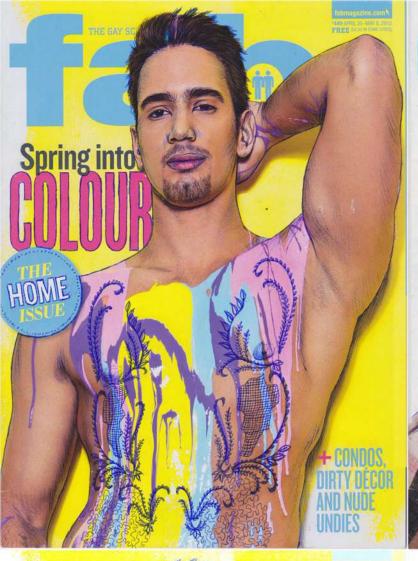


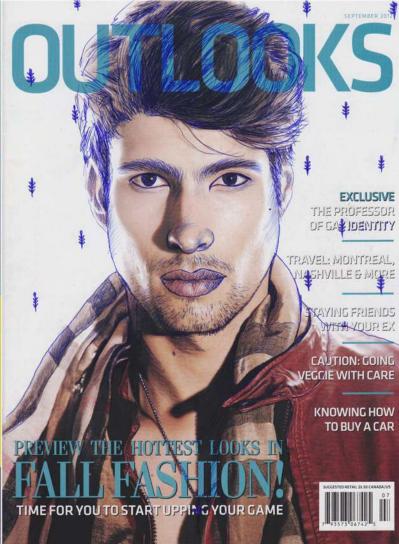
# Reverse Whitewashing

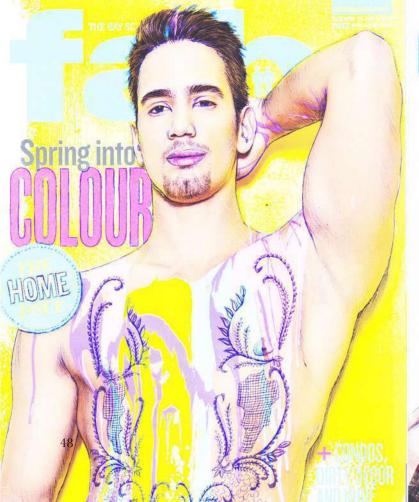


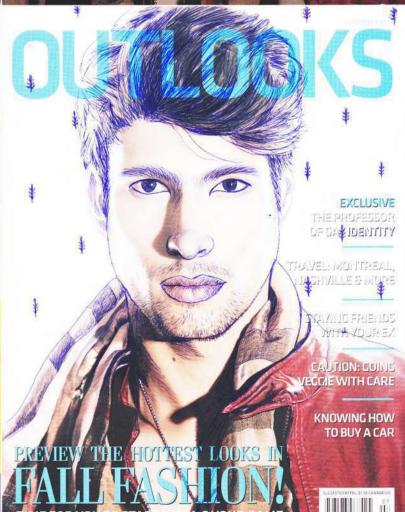
Details, *Reverse Whitewashing*, Drawings with Ballpoint Pen on Gay Magazines and Sun Bleached, 8 3/8" x 10 7/8" inches, 2011-2013.

In these series of drawing interventions on gay magazines the images are repurposed by tracing the homonormtive representations of the gay male bodies into queers of color specificaly Asian features cued from the artist's racial identity. Now leaving us with an alternative from homonormative representations after being bleached by the sun.















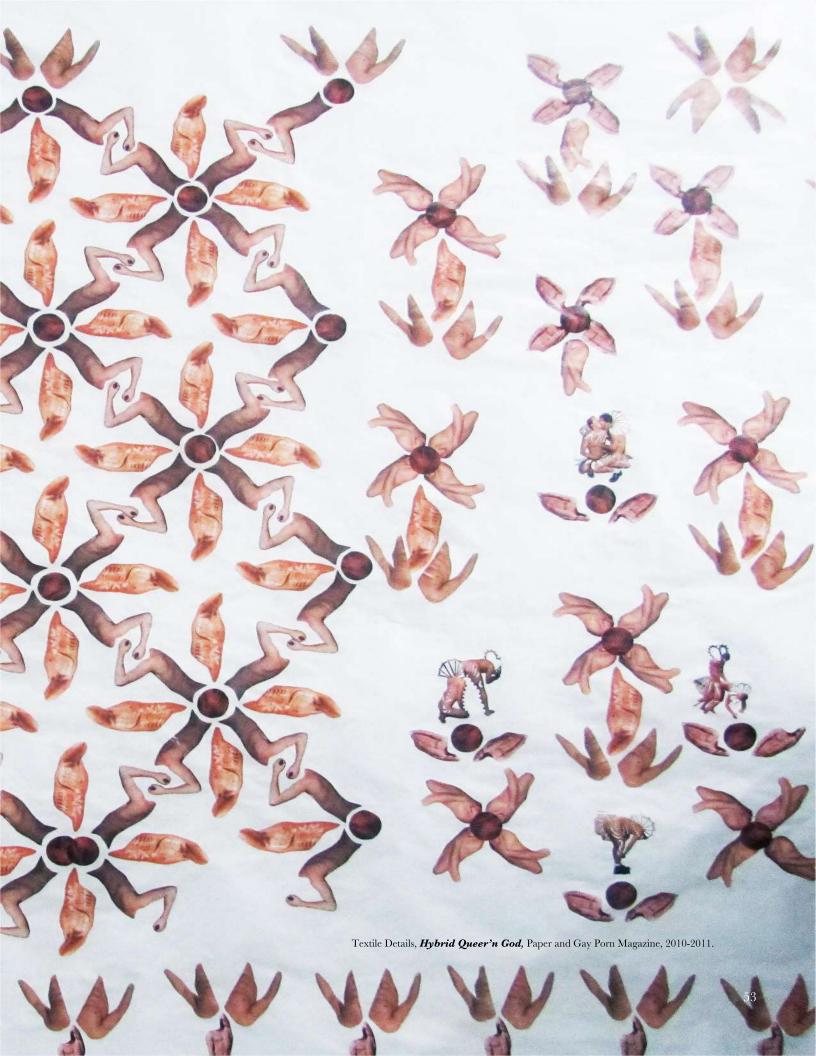


## Julius Poncelet Manapul

Paper Costumes and Chandelier from Gay Magazines, Wallpaper is crafted from customized stencils, Acrylic on Paper. Life Size Constructions, Performed by the artist at the Rivoli, Toronto, Canada for Paradise Now, Fashion Art Fusion, July 2011, 2010-2011.

The Elizabethan dress comments on post colonial issues. A reflection on my self as a gay minority surrounded with abundant images of Homonormativity, gay white males (the muscle bound Ken boy toys) that I had appropriated from gay magazines and gay porn magazines. The sculpture is transformed into a hybrid Queen God with a Bali Demon Mask, Indonesian/Asian accessories, Catholic symbolism of the Halo/Chalice and the skull nakelace from the Hindu God Kali. To recreate a new Monster God that critiques my own beliefs towards Religious Gods and how Queer identity and Religion blends in my own take on Altars. These new images beg the questions, what is sacred? What do we realy worship or hold up as perfect? What is to be masculine? Who decides? Who has the power?















Cut-out Male Patterns from Gay Magazines, 2011.



Claw Gloves from Gay Magazine, 2011.

Details, *Hybrid Queer'n God*, Gay Porn Magazine, 2010-2011.



