

PIO ABAD
Artist Statement

I am interested in the patterns through which excess nourishes idiosyncratic and inevitably idiotic systems of meaning: from the calculated hegemony of totalitarian aesthetics and the shambled marriage of 70's modernism and the rococo in Imelda Marcos's disco-infused regime, to our own schizophrenic relationship with luxury. An anxiety towards these persistent failures of history informs my work – a nagging feeling that we are tragically bound to these patterns, fated to exist in a perpetual state of farce.

Offering the grotesque as a creative strategy, I attempt to locate my practice within the precarious relationships that exist within systems of excess, navigating the fine lines between the decadent and the delusional, the pompous and the primal, and the ornamental and the excremental. At the core of my practice is the creation of spectacle, but one shackled to an inevitable sense of entropy. Objects from failed histories reoccur in my work for the sole purpose of establishing a vernacular for excess – placing them within a hierarchy of desires and exposing their complicity to a circus of cyclical collapse. Neoclassical floor patterns transform into battlegrounds while pearls and pompadours decompose into viscera, ultimately descending into an entanglement of grotesque and often desperately humorous gestures that hover between the familiar and the abstract and caught between simultaneous acts of celebration and destruction.

Central to developing these ideas is the exploration of the relationship between drawing and sculpture. My first sculptural works were brought on by a realisation that the drawings had a plastic quality that needed to be further articulated. The drawings, while accomplished autonomous objects in themselves, seemed more like proposals for something tangible. Employing the metonymic function of the pompadour wig as well as its associations with parody and the grotesque body, the sculptures that I eventually produced became very confrontational representations of the denial and decay that accompanies decadence and the clumsy attempts of historical detritus at ill-conceived resurrections.

Recently, I have returned to drawing as a way of enriching the vocabulary of my sculptural work. Creating tightly constructed worlds that exist within seemingly incoherent forms, there is a simultaneous staging of the production and the negation of symbols. Using the totalitarian and utopian implications of pattern as a starting point, I am interested in how the construction of pattern immediately instigates a system of control in the process of drawing and what happens when the drawing becomes a mere surface of a sculpture, the ambiguity that arises when a regimented system becomes subjugated to another process.