

Press

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EXHIBITION REVIEWS

than anatomical correctness. Renato's drawings, too, are about the spirit of things rather than photorealist precision.

In *Untitled (Hammer)* (1998), the viewer is struck by Renato's uncanny drawing skills. Here is a remarkable job of representing a dark metal hammer, and the subtle differences in shadowing on its black surface, barely shimmering when held in a bath of light. In *Untitled (Banana Segment)* (1998), Renato depicts the bruises and spots on the over-ripe fruit's skin with such stunning accuracy that the image seems more detailed than any photograph could ever be.

Renato's ability to make the most commonplace object dramatic is exemplified in *Untitled (English Breakfast)* (1998). Here he presents a crumpled, used tea sachet with a Mannerist's attention to the exaggerated folds in the mesh bag's collapsed form. The braids in the tea bag's string are drawn with such care that one notices the tiny plaits, as if they, too, are an important part of a larger story of this throwaway object, suddenly made mythical and transcendent.

Other images are ghostly, haunting depictions of ordinary objects. In *Untitled (Cracker)* (1998), Renato presents a life-size rendition of a single saltine wafer, positioned off-center on a white background. Drawn with the softest pressure on his ball-point pen, the cracker seems to be disappearing into the paper itself. In *Untitled (Toilet)* (1999), he uses the same delicate touch to achieve a minimalist, almost abstract, image, and thus transforms the act of staring into a latrine a meditative experience.

Renato's more abstract works—which are, paradoxically, some of his most precise—are the most superb. *Untitled (Boxers)* (1998), depicts a pair of plaid undershorts as they lie crumpled on the floor, immediately after being shed by the owner. The viewer's eyes and mind must untangle the blob-like image to read it, thus adding a conceptual edge to the simple, yet amazingly detailed composition. *Untitled*

(*Blade*) (1995), is mysterious at first. Yet, the viewer is drawn into Renato's enigmatic shades and amorphous forms in monochromatic ink. Even more extraordinarily, beyond the quasi-abstract nature of this drawing, Renato's depiction of a large knife ultimately reads as such.

Untitled (Paint on Glass) (1998), is a triumph. In this piece, Renato renders clumps of extra paint left behind on a fellow artist's palette. Every imprecise brush mark and swirl is startlingly recorded by Renato with the utmost precision. Looking at this enigmatic work, one truly senses Renato's fascination with the tense dance between the ephemeral and the permanent, the random and the intentional, the mundane and the ultimately beautiful.

Reena Jana

THE UNITED STATES

San Francisco

Renato at Hosfelt Gallery

Looking at the meticulous, ballpoint pen on paper compositions by the Filipino artist Renato, one understands the pure joy that the artist must feel when engaged in the drawing process. When one realizes that each of these exquisitely crafted images is created in one draft—in one of the most permanent of mediums—one senses the artist's deep, trance-like state when he puts pen to paper.

In each piece, Renato captures objects that he has encountered in his daily life: a used tea bag, tire marks in the mud, a pear cut in two. Yet, despite his virtuoso ability to represent each object on paper with painstaking attention to detail, Renato's works are more than merely illustrative. As in the traditional Chinese painting of birds that focuses more on the creature's essence rather