

## Press

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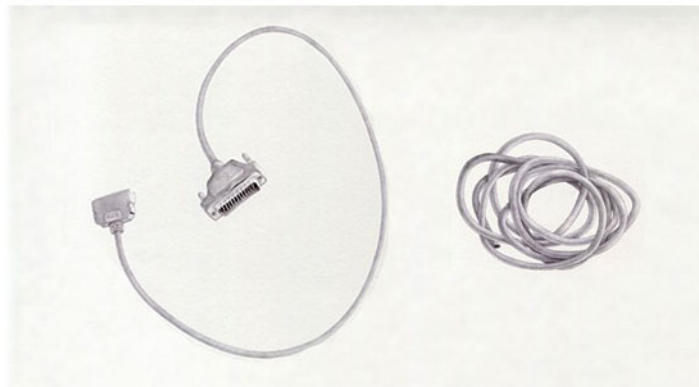
### Arts & Leisure

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## The art of ordinary things

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**HOW MANY** Filipino artists can say that their works have been collected by the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York? Renato Orara can. In 2004, eight of his works were bought by MoMA.



TWO untitled works from Renato Orara's ongoing series *Ten Thousand Things That Breathe*, sets sights on gamers  
*That Breathe*, which he started in 1989. There are also eight works from his year 2009 series *Library Bookworks*, which are books in which one finds ballpoint pen drawings of human ears.

### THE NEW YORK ART SCENE

Breaking into the New York art scene is difficult for anybody, said the artist. The problem when he was starting out was that there were more artists than there exhibition spaces and so galleries were drowning under exhibit proposals and some weren't even looking at those submissions. So Mr. Orara began by exhibiting in Tokyo, Bangkok, and Manila. He organized these himself and there were usually in unconventional spaces like a library gallery and a hospital gallery. In Manila, he was able to exhibit in the Cultural Center of the Philippines. This allowed him to create a resumé which was also filled up with articles and reviews came out in newspapers.

With these credentials, Mr. Orara was invited to exhibit at San Francisco's Hosfelt Gallery.

Then he heard about a viewing program in New York's The Drawing Center, which meant that the then curator Luis Camnitzer would not just look at slides (the format used by artists to reproduce their works) but would take time to see the actual artworks. "My drawings did not translate well in slides," said Mr. Orara, so this was a great opportunity for him. The curator responded well to his work and from then on, more curators and gallerists became aware of Mr. Orara and his work.

### ART OF THE BALLPEN

Of all the art materials that one can use, why did the artist choose an ordinary ballpen? It started when Mr. Orara began his series *Ten Thousand Things That Breathe*. At that time, he hadn't been doing art for eight years. The one day he boarded a subway in New York, and saw a sleeping homeless man. "I could not resist drawing his face," he told *BusinessWorld*. Having nothing with him with which to draw but a ballpen and a white shopping bag, he started. He continued working on his drawing even after he got off the train. "When I finished it, I felt I had something here," he said.

He began to draw his surroundings, and more often than not, he was fascinated with commonplace objects. One such at Silverlens is an untitled work with faintly drawn circles in which are what look like bits of bar code, text, numbers, and lines. Asked what these objects were, he said they were chads. Mr. Orara had bought a new puncher and decided to test it out on an income tax form which had mistakes. When he saw the scattered pieces, he was inspired to draw.

Mr. Orara is attracted to the ballpen because of the visual effects that it can create. One cannot get dark shining black lines with a pencil. If one uses a charcoal stick, one's lines are dark but they are harsh. In contrast, the ballpen is flexible as one can make its lines harsh but one can also create softer lines. "Every time you add a layer, the quality changes in surprising ways," he said. "Whenever I draw, I wait for something to come alive then I move on to the next section." -- **Jasmine Agnes T. Cruz**

*The exhibit runs until Oct. 24. Silverlens is located at 2F YMC Bldg 2, 2320 Don Chino Roces Avenue Ext., Makati City.*

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