

## Power and Performativity: The Case of *Tupada*\*

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**T***upada* is a Filipino term for illegally staged cockfights. Linguistically, it finds its roots in the three-century long Spanish colonial occupation of the Philippines. It is precisely *tupada*'s overriding spirit of furtive, unsanctioned action which initially informed the work of a loosely configured gathering of primarily Manila-based artists who trace their creative paths to the academe, street/conventional theater, political mobilization networks, gallery/studio/session work (in music, painting, installation, photography, video, film), and an assortment of mainstream/alternative professional endeavors. This paper dwells mainly on their body of work which taps into the idioms of *tupada* as a feisty, no holds barred, off the cuff event taking place on the sly.

The range of work which figures in *Tupada*'s early stagings include: the body painting of the now defunct Art2Tan2Art (loosely translated as: painting to skin/body as art object and skin/body to painting); visual explorations of institutionalized gender types in the work of Mitch Garcia; Arnel Ramiscal's recourse to the use of indigenous motifs as critical allusions to the audience-baiting tactics of the entertainment industry; Ronaldo Ruiz's haunting commentaries on alienation and globalization; and Sam Peñaso's reenactment of death rituals tied into personal memory and the Philippines' human rights record. *Tupada*'s collaboratively undertaken actions and gestures run the gamut of straight-out role-taking to episodic autobiographical catharsis mining themes bound to domestic blight, urban alienation, as well as other accumulated private histories laden with broadened critical insight. It is pertinent to point out that since this paper was presented at Performance Studies International 10<sup>th</sup> Conference (PSI #10) in 2004, much of the work of the artists aforementioned has moved on. They have since taken a marked turn toward incorporating the use of video and to some degree, sound art elements in a very obvious shift from purely corporeal actions that were not as bound to lengthier technical set-ups and which were literally more mobile actions than these later incarnations. *Tupada* has consequently re-named itself *Tupada* Action and Media Art (TAMA).