

The Impact of Cultural Assimilation on First-Generation Filipino-American Children:
An Artist's Perspective

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“I alternate between being conspicuous and vanishing, being stared at or looked through. Although the conditions may seem contradictory, they have in common the loss of control. In most instances, I am who others perceive me to be rather than how I perceive myself to be.”

—Frank Wu, *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*¹

I. Introduction

During the mass villainization of ethnic minorities in the post-9/11 United States, I came face to face with an issue that had been lurking in the shadows my entire childhood. Being neither white, black, hispanic, or what is traditionally considered “Asian,” I was placed into a generic, mistrusted “ethnic” category and sentenced to social stigmatization until I could prove I belonged elsewhere. Luckily, my salvation lay in the simple explanation that I had a white mother and Filipino father. My quick acceptance back into the homogenous community of suburban Texas school children left me puzzled. Despite the fact that my classmates had been ready to turn me into a pariah, I somehow escaped that fate and was being treated as if nothing were wrong. Was there really so little redeeming about being a Filipino-American that passing as white was more desirable?

Unsure and adrift, I began to realize that my identity was something so much more than the genetics I had studied in school. Since that time, and for the next two decades, I have continued to explore and question what exactly it means to be a first-generation child born to an American immigrant. By reconciling my father’s experiences living in the United States with his narratives of his former life in the Philippines, I continue to probe and broaden my understanding of what it means to be of Filipino descent. At the time, I have sought other artists who have identities similar to mine in order to construct a bigger picture of what it means to be a first-generation Filipino-American artist in the global contemporary art world today.

¹ Frank H. Wu, “East is East, East is West” in *Yellow* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), 8.

The responsibility of identifying which cultural traditions to maintain ultimately falls on the generation that grows up straddling the traditional and the American cultures.²

II. Ideas of Immigrant Identity and Notions of Sociological Pedantry

One often hears of stories of immigrant parents talking to their children about the hardships they faced, the trials they overcame, and how everything they have done has been in support of their offspring's future. What is not as easily discussed in these common tropes and clichés are the following questions: What happens when immigrants end up with spouses born and raised in the country of immigration? What happens when their children are raised firmly in one society, yet told they are part of another ethnic group, i.e. the group with which their immigrant parent identifies (albeit in some cases with ambivalence)?

As the younger of two children born to a biracial couple, I have had trouble fitting into any of the ethnographic identities that were presented to me. In his rush to assimilate in order to become the ideal American parent, my father did something that many immigrant parents do: he shed his native heritage. My brother and I were raised without any modicum of Filipino culture, experiencing it infrequently through food or snippets of conversation between my father and his siblings in California. To this day, I do not fully comprehend Tagalog, the most commonly spoken language of the 7,107 islands of the Philippines, nor do I have the essential know-how to produce many common Filipino culinary dishes. I cannot dance the Tinikling, nor can I name any of the national holidays or heroes to which my father, on occasion, pays tribute. These small lacunae are symptoms of a larger social disconnection that many first-generation children in the

² Helen Zia, "Reinventing Our Culture," in *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000), 262.

United States face. Even *The Filipino Channel* (TFC), which broadcasts propagandistic television programming sponsored by the Filipino government to promote the idea of the Global Filipino, has acknowledged the discrepancies of cultural literacy between native-born citizens and those born outside of the islands proper.³ Even inside of the United States, there is an increasing wave of children born to Filipino families that end up straddling the line between generations, as Frank Wu points out in his book *Yellow: Race in America Beyond Black and White*.

In a 2000 California survey of Asian-white intermarriages, Filipina-white intermarriages were the most common. In the Golden State throughout the 1990s, there were 16,503 births of children to Filipina mothers and white fathers and only 5,556 births to white mothers and Filipino fathers.⁴

This group of 22,059 Filipino-American children is only one portion of the second fastest growing Asian-American population that is coming of age in this post-digital, post-information era.⁵ The question of identity politics looms large as these, and indeed all children born from mixed parentage, strive to find their place in between the United States and their parents' countries of origin.

It is important to note that I am primarily discussing the diasporic ideology and culture connected to children born to parents who were a part of the “fourth wave” of the Filipino immigration to the United States, which began in the 1960s after the abolition of the restriction of nation-of-origin based immigration policy.⁶ Due in part to how recently this wave started, all

³ Ethel Marie P. Regis, “Mediating Global Filipinos: The Filipino Channel and The Filipino Diaspora,” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkley, 2013).

⁴ Frank H. Wu, “The Changing Face of America,” *Yellow*, 275.

⁵ Ibid. As of 2002, Filipino-Americans account for roughly 1.9 million Americans in the U.S.A.

⁶ This really begins in 1965 with the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act, also known as the Hart-Celler Act which overturned the Emergency Quota Act of 1921, which restricted the number of immigrants from Africa and Asia that the US would accept. This was a part of a larger push from the international community to delegitimize discrimination-based immigration patterns.

of the U.S.-born Filipino-Americans within this grouping are under age 60, and can be further broken down into more detailed sub-groups based on international policy, specifics of immigration, and others. For example, my father came to the United States during a time of martial law enacted by then Filipino President, Emanuel Marcos, while his brother came to the U.S.A. as a G.I. who had served in the Vietnam War.⁷ Many of the Filipino-American artists or political activists working today are either a part of this larger migratory group or are recent descendants thereof. First-generation artists, including Maeve Leslie, Justin Pastores, and even myself, are the next face of contemporary Filipino-American art because our demographic age range is the first to have been raised to adulthood entirely within the U.S.A. during the digital information age.⁸

Through the act of immigration, many Filipino parents leave behind local identities that delineate them within their own country; instead, they assume a more generalized version of their more specific national identity. When children of immigrants says, “I am Filipino,” they are not saying that they are Visayan, Tagalog, Igorot, Filipino, or belonging to any other ethnic group that comprise the islands; rather, they proclaim a general identity predicated on a generalized geopolitical nationality.⁹ Some Filipino-American children might know more specific information about their ethnic and cultural heritage, though in many cases their parent’s or parents’ respective processes of assimilation have reduced this to a bare minimum. It must be

⁷ President. Emanuel Marcos instituted martial law over all of the Philippine islands between 1972 to 1981.

⁸ Many younger, first-generation Filipino-American artists and activists recognize that their place is at the forefront of the current political conversations surrounding immigration and national identity. This stems from the fact that the Philippines was both a Spanish colony for 300+ years, but also an American colony, between 1899-1946. The Philippines share many traditions and influences with modern Latin American cultures because of the extended colonial periods that were presided over by the same foreign nations.

⁹ “Filipino” is both the general term for people from the Philippines and also a term that refers to a specific ethnic group of people born in the Philippines of Spanish descent.

noted that this observation ensues predominantly within multiracial families that I have come in contact with, where only one parent is of Filipino descent.¹⁰ Because of this, Filipino-American children refer to themselves as *Filipino/a/x*, or the more traditional *pinoy (male)/pinay (female)*, while not knowing the implications of doing so.¹¹ To many, this is the vestige of heritage that we wish to lay claim to, even if it means using a colonial naming convention established by the very people that spurred their forebears to come to this country.¹²

On the one hand, I fit perfectly under the “American” label that was predominant in my childhood years (early 1990s through early 2000s), when I was told that the United States was a melting pot of nationalities and identities, and that everyone was on equal footing. However, on the other hand, as I grew older and the general tenor of this country became more hostile toward non-white ethnicities, I became more aware of how I did not quite fit into the cookie-cutter, white, nuclear family model that was pervasive in the part of Dallas, Texas suburbia where I was raised.¹³ The color of my father’s, my brother’s and my own skin set us apart from those around us on a daily basis, while the dialects that my father spoke to our extended family were not exactly the same as the Spanish which we were taught in school. Wu elaborates,

In race matters, words matter too. Asian Americans have been excluded by the very terms used to conceptualize race. People speak of ‘American’ as if it means ‘white’ and ‘minority’ as if it means ‘black.’ In that semantic formula, Asian-Americans, neither black nor white, consequently are neither American nor minority.¹⁴

¹⁰ In my experience, families that are fully Filipino generally share the cultures/customs of the islands with their children. In those cases, Tagalog is one of the languages spoken at home, and those children are much more cognizant of their origins, both nationally and ethnically.

¹¹ The “o/a/x” at the end of an ethnicity or nationality can be used to identify a person as either male, female, or something outside of the gender binary respectively.

¹² AnneMarie. “The conversation Around ‘Filipinx’” Formation of a Filipinx American, 4 June 2017, www.formationofafilipinxamerican.com/the-conversation-around-filipinx/.

¹³ 9/11 and the 2002 War in Iraq were catalysts that propagated the realization of the amount of hostility and racism towards non-black ethnic populations.

¹⁴ Frank H. Wu, “East is East, East is West,” *Yellow*, 20.

As someone on neither side of the stereotypical majority/minority spectrum, I was constantly at a loss regarding where I fit in. My father proclaimed us as a Filipino household, but, in reality, I had no idea what that meant until much later. As we were growing up, my brother and I had very little to no interaction with our Filipino relatives, who lived across the county in California, and thus very limited experience interacting with others who also knew what it meant to be Filipino, or even Filipino-American. The only other Filipino family in my hometown was another mixed race family, with a son my age who was ostracized by the other children and, by extension, me, for not fitting the stereotypical norm.¹⁵ Later on, I realized that by “othering” him, I was in effect isolating myself even further from any form of interaction that I might have with other Filipino-Americans.

Another window into the Filipino world for me were the infrequent and strange family trips to a regional Filipino church. Religion in the Philippines is central to the way of life, with over 81% of the country identifying as Roman Catholic.¹⁶ While important in other respects, religious piety in the U.S. does not mirror the Philippines, with only 17% of the people under the age of 29 identifying as Roman Catholic, contrasted with 35% of that same age bracket identifying as either non-religious, agnostic, or atheist.¹⁷ Every time my family ventured to that church to attend one of the larger holiday services, we would invariably be stuck between people with whom we could not communicate and who seemed uninterested in us since we were

¹⁵ These “norms” include: being interested in sports, being physically fit, and other gender stereotypes commonly associated with the deep south.

¹⁶ This is a holdover from the days of Spanish Colonial rule, when Catholicism was forced upon people native to the islands. Over 91% of the country identifies as broadly Roman Catholic, while the remaining 9% of Christians in the country comprise different denominations including Protestant, Orthodox, Reformist, Iglesia Filipina Independiente, and others; Carmelita N. Ericta, *A “Demography” The Philippines in Figures*, (Republic of the Philippines: National Statistics Office) 2014, 27.

¹⁷ “Religious Landscape Study.” Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C., 2014.
<https://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/age-distribution/>.

obviously different and unfamiliar to them. Nonetheless, we would still make occasional pilgrimages to these churches in order to provide my father with some semblance of community with other Filipino immigrants. During this handful of trips, I learned about traditional Filipino games, dances, and, most importantly to me, food.

Besides these snippets of organized religion and culture, my other window into being Filipino-American has been through infrequent cultural expressions that we were exposed to in passing by my father. These include his personal anecdotes, his commentary on current events, or his remarks about the differences between his and our adolescent experiences. His comments have ranged from complaints about English idioms to frustrations with an individual's self-motivation. He would often remind us that he "messed the words on purpose to make you laugh."¹⁸ One noticeable comment that he has repeated frequently throughout my life is: "I wanted to be an artist, but [my sister] Lenore said, 'there's no money in fashion. There is money in accounting.' [...] So I did that and was able to come here."¹⁹ This anecdote, which he cited so many times while I was younger, was one that my father used to justify why he believed that my brother and I were selfish and acting entitled by following our dreams to become artists rather than choosing a path to stable, high-paying careers.²⁰ Whether due to his disappointment in or frustration with us, my father implied that by choosing such precarious career paths, we were jeopardizing the futures that he had sought to improve for his children when he chose to immigrate. Alternatively, our following our dreams is an example of the opportunities that he had wished for us when he decided to emigrate to the U.S.

¹⁸ Interview with Oscar Iluzada January 5, 2019.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ This trend of trying to force us into following in his/my mother's footsteps and aim for high paying careers lessened once I was accepted into art school at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland.

It is with these thoughts and personal experiences in mind I purpose that: a) first-generation children born to mixed families experience a unique form of cultural distortion that is predicated on their parent's attempts to simultaneously conform to American norms and retain some form their own cultural identity; and b) the reconciling of the cultural dissonance and disassociation with the Philippines and the country's culture is a rich area that many artists use as a springboard to delve into their own artistic practices.

III. My Brand of Filipino-American: Context & Theoretical Implications

In discussions with me, my father, Oscar Iluzada (b. 1952; Binan-Laguna, Philippines, immigrated to the United States in 1975) constantly reiterated that, “[w]hat I wanted for my family is what I wanted when I was 24. I want [my children] to succeed and be happy.”²¹ While I cannot comment explicitly on how well he achieved these goals (as I am unsure on how to quantitatively measure happiness), other members of my father’s immediate family did not achieve the same relative peace of mind that he was able to find, with some being “broken” by their move to the U.S. and the transition from a third-world to a first-world country. When talking about his siblings who were unable to adjust, my father would bring up the point that “[when] moving to the U.S. from the Third World, the idea of ‘being free’ can get to your head, and sometimes if they don’t listen to their elders, don’t think about the consequences, they get broken by this ‘freedom.’”²² The heart of these ideas hints at the foundation of the narrative that many Filipino immigrants share: the notion that “since there was nothing left for [them] in the Philippines,” many of them immigrated to the U.S. and worked tirelessly in create better life. If a person did not succeed, the belief is that they failed due to their own personal shortcomings, entirely ignoring the system which allowed them to fail. As a first-generation child born in the U.S., I am distant enough from the emigration experience to see that there is a systemic barrier and emphasis on the personal achievement in the immigration system that many members of the older generations refuse to acknowledge.

One aspect of my current artistic practice explores this idea of the diasporic identity of Filipino immigrants and their first-generation children, specifically within the younger members

²¹ Interview with Oscar Iluzada January 5, 2019.

²² Interview with Oscar Iluzada. October 16, 2018.

of the generation who are growing up without direct personal ties to the Philippines. This includes topics such as growing up in a strong Filipino/Filipino-American community, not visiting the Philippines, and not being taught the regional languages that one or more parents grew up speaking. I am not alone in noticing these trends, as other younger Filipinx Americans who are equally invested in the political intricacies of Philippine-American policy and diaspora have proliferated in recent years. From political activist/ musicians like Ruby Ibara or Bambu to introspective progressive identity bloggers like Anne Marie of *Formation of a Filipinx American*, first-generation children are pointing out the discrepancies between how we have been raised and how the generations that immigrated are interacting with other generations of Filipinos born in the United States.²³ Contemporary rapper Ruby Ibara (b. 1991, Tacloban City, Philippines) notes her family's treatment of her younger sister who was born in the U.S. as follows: "[m]y sister never learned to say our language cause my mom's afraid / That she will turn to me someday and struggle to assimilate," which highlights one of the strongest divisions between the two generations in question.²⁴ As discussed by Alejandro Portes and Rubén G. Rumbaut in their landmark study, *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*, "parents who have migrated try to keep the mother tongue alive in the family, as a link to the homeland and its culture [...] the second generation become less fluent in the mother tongue as they learn the majority language."²⁵ The loss of language is one of the biggest factors in the loss of cultural identity and diaspora, especially in subsequent generations and to those who are

²³ Many of the political activist/musicians like Ruby Ibara or Bambu speak out against the systemic racism they face while in the United States. By talking about things like micro-aggressions (small comments or actions that reinforce a white-dominance) to struggles of assimilation faced by immigrants, to inherent systemic issues with the economic, and judicial systems, they critique the world around them in an attempt to bring attention to the hardships and problems faced by people who are being left behind.

²⁴ Ruby Ibarra. "The Other Side, Welcome." Rec. 3 Oct. 2017. *Circa91*. By Ruby Ibarra. MP3. 2017.

²⁵ A. Portes and R. Rumbaut. *Legacies: The Story of the Immigrant Second Generation* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 114.

brought up in a mixed environment household. In the 2010 study, *Interrogating Childhood and diaspora Through the Voices of Children in Sweden* Marren Bak and Kerstin Von Brömssen note that:

In these expressions we think [children] imply speaking and being part of a majority, a sense of belonging through the language, of not being the other. The diasporic consciousness implies the awareness of difference [...] In the children's talk of language we hear the expression of their sense of difference, a sense of difference that is temporarily eased when they are visiting the place of origin, but only to reappear when they feel that even there they are different.²⁶

This fear of othering and not assimilating is a well-documented concern amongst children, especially vis-à-vis social and intrapersonal interactions between those who are and are not native born.

Another important part of my work's conceptual ideology is that everything I work with comes from a place of ethnographic self-discovery, reconciliation, and exploration about what it means to be a Filipino-American and, by extension, Asian-American. The delineation between the two comes primarily because, as Helen Zia puts it, "[a]mong the separate – and expanding – Asian immigrant groups, the vision of pan-Asian unity was not compelling; survival was their main focus."²⁷ My father and, by extension, I, have traditionally isolated being Filipino from being Asian. One possibility is that this is due to Filipinos not sharing the same facial features as the more numerous Chinese- or Japanese-Americans, while another theory attributes this disconnection to distrust and/or prejudice towards those from mainland Asia. In my view, this stems from the not-so-distant memories of Japanese expansion and occupation in the Philippines that

²⁶ Marren Bak and Kerstin Von Brömssen, *Interrogating Childhood and diaspora Through the Voices of Children in Sweden*, (Göteborg, Sweden: Department of Social Work, Göteborg University Press) 121.

²⁷ Helen Zia, "Out on the Front Lines," in *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*, 20.

my father's family experienced during the second world war; as such those extreme and at times prejudicial feelings were transferred to us under the guise of exclusion and Philippine patriotism.²⁸ Regardless, following the rich contemporary tradition of self-exploration, Filipino-American artists fall into a nebulous grey zone that is only just being defined. Historically speaking, the Philippines has generally fallen under jurisdiction of two different imperial powers, Spanish, and American, while geographically thrown into the "South East Asian" category. This has resulted in an identity crisis for Filipino-American artists who end up classified according to categories that do not reflect their cultural ideology. Until recently, Filipino-American artists were lumped together with either broader Asian artists, or with American artists, but never under their own distinction.

The third major recurring theme in my recent body of work is the deviation from the practice of art being produced primarily for decoration. This is a departure from my classical training and apprenticeship under master printer Don Gorvett, a traditional land and seascape printer (fig. 1), who taught me to strictly create work that was aesthetically pleasing, devoid of content, and sold to buyers solely for use as decoration (fig. 2). Additionally, my technical training reflects my pursuit of becoming a "Master Printer," or someone who works collaboratively with others to create printed editions. Following that tradition, I end up limited to serving as a tool for the collaborating artist to use for their own ends, an extension of mechanical reproduction. My own ideas, as opposed to techniques, are relegated to the sidelines as whomever I am collaborating with contributes the sole artistic voice that remains present in the

²⁸ Another aspect of formative conservatism that my father grew up during an era marked by nationalist and conservative trends in the Philippines. Many of the early Presidents pushed "Filipino-First" social and economic policies.

work. While there is nothing innately “wrong” with producing work in either of these manners (for financial or other goals), as an artist I found myself wanting to explore more complex themes and ideologies. This departure from my previous method of working is what ultimately lead me down the path to graduate school.²⁹ More precisely, this desire led me to enroll in the University of the Arts M.F.A. in Book Arts + Printmaking Program.³⁰ As a result, my recent pieces can be read on multiple levels based around my relationship with my father and my heritage as a Filipino-American. The pieces discussed below are a small sample of the projects I have developed while working in this new direction.

²⁹ The hope is that graduate school places a focus on the reasoning for individual decisions made during the creative process, I have striven to reach a point where each of make artistic my actions that are a direct result directly from of an intense introspective process.

³⁰ Other factors that lead me into the program include: full-tuition fellowship, economic prospects associated with a terminal degree, being able to be called a “Master Printer” due to an M.F.A.

IV. The Art of Select First-Generation Filipino-American Children

IV.1 Thesis Body of Work

As defined by Karlota I. Contreras-Koterby in her 2016 *Filipino-American Art in the US* status report for the forthcoming American Museum of Philippine Art:

Philippine Art form can be as diverse as the islands of the archipelago, what unifies ‘us’ as practitioners of Philippine art or specifically as Filipino artists, is our desire and self-identification to be part of this collective. Filipino artists, in the main islands of the Philippines, and those who have crossed the oceans to reside elsewhere, are eligible to claim and identify with the Philippine Art. However, this is not just a simple inheritance or inherent identity, rather, this is a dynamic and complex issue that demands a more open and creative discussion in the future within the various communities involved. What is common, is the distinct phenomena of ‘cultural hybridity’ that is characterized and grapples with the complexity of identities of indigenouness, colonial experiences, migration and multiplicity of cultural belongingness.³¹

By staying true to this definition, I have found myself creating work that speaks to the multifaced approach to life that permeates my upbringing, and yet maintains its own individuality within the greater context of the Filipino-American art.

Ninuno Espiritu (2018) (fig. 3), my initial book that lead to my current body of work, came about through research and exploration of my heritage, family mythology, and the desire to bring to life many of the creatures about whom I grew up listening to stories. From the waves of the shallow seas that connect the thousands of islands that make up our ancestral home to the monstrous *Aswang* that my family was said to be descended from, I wanted to create something that would become a link between the rest of my father’s side of the family and myself.³² This

³¹ Karlota I. Contreras-Koterby, “What is Philippine Art?” *Filipino-American Art in the US*. American Museum of Philippine Art. San Francisco, CA. 2016

³² An *Aswang* (pronounced “Oz-wong”) is a creature from Filipino folklore that is similar to a vampire. *Aswangs* are typically beautiful women who can at night separate their torsos from their lower halves and

book serves as a physical representation of my desire to be a part of a community that has always been absent. Separated from this in both distance and language, I was only partially able to communicate with the Tagalog speaking members of my family, using broken and disjointed phrases intermixed with English or allowing my father to speak on my behalf. By the time I had learned enough Tagalog to get by, we had moved even further away from my family, and my need for speaking it waned, leading me to forget those few learned phrases and to feel alienated all over again.

Some of the beings that were important boogey men and monsters of Filipino folklore are still used today as either clan symbols, or fables to teach children proper behavior. The co-opting of these monsters by the Roman Catholic Church was only somewhat successful as many families proudly bare their epitaphs even today. The *Manananggal* (or *Wak-wak*), shares a similar significance to the vampiric *Aswang* to my family, to the point that we paraded around with our own rendition of one at a recent family reunion (fig. 4).³³ Features from both of the creatures can be seen throughout the book, and my own rendition of a *Manananggal* adorns the central spreads overpowering a *Kalinga Mambabarang*, a sorceress from a different tribe.³⁴ Foliage from around my father's childhood house can be seen interspersed throughout the woodcuts, while the transparent waters in the background of the imagery represents the waterways that connect the thousands of islands around Luzon and the greater Philippines. The

fly to neighboring houses. From there, they perch on the roofs and drop their thin needle like tongues through holes to suck the blood of others.

³³ The *Manananggal* (pronounced "Mah-nah-naan-gal") (or Wak-Wak, named for the sound it makes while it flies) is a creature from Filipino folklore that is similar to an *Aswang*. However, *Manananggals* tend to hunt pregnant women, and feed by sucking the life out of their unborn fetus.; Photo from the 2018 Iluzada Clan Reunion, Los Baños Laguna, PH.

³⁴ The *Kalinga* (pronounced "Ka-ling-ga") are another rival tribe of indigenous Filipinos that share their name with the region they are from in northern Luzon. A *Mambabarang* (pronounced "Mah-ba-ba-rang") is a sorceress who can control insects that they keep in bamboo shoots.

portrait at the start is a composite of my father and his three brothers, whereas my self-portrait at the end is embellished with my brother's tattoos. The title combines Tagalog and Spanish, languages that are both still used in the islands, a result of the 333 years of Spanish colonial rule. The text that is placed on the inside cover of the book box serves as a reminder to myself, and as a reminder to all the members of my clan, that the waters between our home of Biñan and wherever we have ended end up are just pathways. That waters that connect the islands are what also connect us to each other. Translated into English, the text reads,

“And who are you to push us apart, while *Lihangin*’s domain brings us closer together?”³⁵

“Even across the sea, we still hear the *Aswang*’s cry.”

“Our ancestor’s spirit calling us home.”

I next began working on *Memories of the Barong* (2018-2019) (fig. 5-6), an installation comprising multiple pieces of translucent handmade abaca paper with imbedded photographs, hand embroidering, graphite, and printed linoleum blocks which stands as the foremost project in my current body of work. The title derives from the two garments on which the designs are based along with the idea that these intangible, cultural memories are inherited from one generation to the next (fig. 7). Each aspect of the installation is cut to into different sewing patterns found in the production of *Barong Tagalogs* from multiple styles and across genders.³⁶ These sewing patterns can be displayed all together or separately, as seen in *Untitled II (Fruit Stall)* (2018)(fig.

³⁵ *Lihangin* (pronounced “Lee-hang-in”) is the name for the Visayan god of wind, referenced because most members of my family who leave the Philippines travel by air to their eventual destinations.

³⁶ *Barong Tagalog* (pronounced “Ba-wrong Tuh-gal-og”) is a traditional Filipino garment, usually considered formalwear. Traditionally, it’s a translucent beige coloring with heavy white silk embroidery around the collar and buttons. These garments are mostly made to order and can be customized depending on a buyer’s choices, often connected to one’s social class. The more heavily embroidered a barong is, the higher its prices and the higher in status the wearer is.

8). When shown together, these disparate sewing patterns form together to create an exploding view of the barong. By flooding the viewer with a wide array of distinct abaca forms, each with its own combination of embedded photograph, linoleum print, hand embroidery, and graphite, the individual pieces assimilate into the collective whole, and each becomes an integral element necessary for the piece to function. Much like how the first-generation children in Filipino-American society integrate with the rest of the U.S.A. while doing their best to retain their individuality. On the backside of some segments, I silkscreened the verses of Jose Rizal's poem, *Song of the Wanderer*.³⁷ This text's significance holds a dual meaning to me. First, it literally is about a person who is returning to their home after a long separation from it, and the feelings of loneliness and heartache at that what has become a foreign land. Second, it speaks to me on a personal level as a metaphor for a displaced person's tenuous connection to the land of their ancestors. With lines like, "he shall wander from place to place; memories shall keep him company," and, "[t]he pilgrim shall return to his country, shall return perhaps to his shore; and shall find only ice and ruin, perished loves, and graves nothing more."³⁸ I feel like I am always trying to catch the fleeting idea of my father's Philippines, and that my inevitable first trip to the islands will result in a dissociative state where I am comparing everything I see to the photographs and stories told to me and which constitute my (imagined) Philippines. Like both the narrator in the song, and Rizal himself, who returned to the Philippines after a long period in exile, I will be the pilgrim, returning to his country; however, what awaits me is not the warmth of family and loved ones but rather their questions, gazes, and judgement as a foreigner.

³⁷ Jose Rizal was an eighteenth-century Filipino Nationalist, whose writings about the condition and plight of the Filipino people under Spanish colonial rule resulted in his exile, and eventual execution by the Spanish government in 1896; <https://www.joserizal.com/song-of-the-wanderer/>

³⁸ Ibid.

Another related piece, *Untitled I (The Water Buffalo)* (2018), has the same basic construction as the elements used in *Memories of the Barong* but includes a stronger presence of hand embroidery (fig. 9). The sheet is also still primarily a rectangle, with the upper two corners cut at a 45° angle. The imbedded family photograph is centered on the page, with a linocut descending down from the upper center. The placement is a direct reference to the traditional barong embroidery, which uses intricate linework and floral motifs as a decorative display of social status and expression of personal identity. The imbedded photographs are reproductions of shots taken of my father, his friends, and his family. These handful of photographs are what remains of his life in the Philippines. By using these images, I bring myself closer to the person my father once was in an attempt to connect with him more closely, and to understand the differences between how he and I were raised. The printed linocuts take their cues from both classical and contemporary barong embroidery patterns, utilizing many of the same stylistic elements, such as the strong geometric patterns, vertical and diagonal lacing, and floral adornments. Because of the nature of this artisan garment, no two barongs are identical, though I used various references while carving each design, so that the resulting patterns are reminiscent of, but not identical to, any barong that has actually been sewn.

The next iteration of my thesis work, *As Brothers Do* (2019) (fig. 10), is a series of four 10"x10" panels, each of which contains multiple layers of the same translucent abaca paper laminated together. These strata all contain some combination of photographic elements imbedded within them, screen or relief printed elements, gouache, pulp painting, or pulp blowouts. Weaving its way through the piece is the suggestion of a belt whose tail end is a pulp blowout on abaca visibly overlaying the entirety of the left most panel and whose buckle has been silk screened onto the abaca which veils the right most panel. The word "Silence" can be

seen printed in white underneath the abaca on the left most panel, sitting on top of a printed flower that overlays a photograph of my father in his R.O.T.C. uniform.³⁹ The two center panels contain a split color photograph of my uncle walking alongside an ox cart, (the same photo that I used in *Untitled I (The Water Buffalo)*) with the split leaving my uncle on one side and the cart with an enlarged version of my father in uniform as a double layered pulp blowout in white and green (green underneath, white on top) stepping out towards the viewer. Underneath the abaca on the side with my uncle is a linocut print of my brother, who gazes out of the panel, as if judging the viewer from afar. In the far-right panel, underneath the belt buckle, is the pulp-painted silhouette of a figure on top of a printed barong embroidery pattern. Above it, on the lower right, a portion of the current Iluzada house in Biñan is visible. On the two end panels, the central button column of the barong embroidery pattern is painted a graphic sea green. Other elements around the panels are also glazed over with transparent washed of gouache. This series expresses my desire to create a work to frame my connection with my older brother, Nick; in the end, this instead reflects on the relationships between the two of us *and* my father, as well as my father's relationship with his younger brother. In the piece, an image of my brother is veiled behind a layer of translucent abaca, present yet distant, which is similar to our relationship. Due to our age gap—he is four and half years my senior—we have never been close; he tends to look down on me from afar, only communicating with me when required to do so. In a similar manner, my father and his younger brother Ed do not talk that much either, mainly due to my father's displeasure with what Ed has done with himself. How Nick treats me echoes my father's handling of Ed. As such, I try to draw parallels within the piece to suggest that while we might hail from different generations, we still have very similar interfamilial dynamics. The sea green

³⁹ All youth in the Philippines are required to enroll in an R.O.T.C. training program to teach discipline and paramilitary organization in case they are ever recruited for wartime purposes.

pillars that are formed by the button column reference both the waters that surround family's ancestral home, the distance between each set of brothers, and serve as a tie to other pieces, specifically *Ninuno Espiritu*, which has a similar color pallet. The belt parts that are present on either end of the quadriptych speak to one of the common variables that Nick and I both endured: my father's physically inflected disciplinary actions using the end of his belt.

The most recent piece in this body of work is the book *Buckle* (2019), which combines several linocut embroidery patterns, lead type, screen-printing, and mono-printing from an old belt (fig. 11). Utilizing many of the linocut embroidery patterns created for the individual sewing patterns in the afore mentioned *Memories of the Barong* installation, I layered impressions pulled from the body of a belt directly to create a crisscrossed series of images that reference the markings left behind on the skin after being whipped or spanked. From there, I combined text taken from a psychology study on the neurological impact of spanking on children with my own reflections.⁴⁰ All of this is printed on translucent handmade abaca paper, which allows the reader to see through the various pages and access the marks left on the paper as the book progresses. To me, these impressions pulled from the belts form a map that transcends cultural boundaries. Disciplinary punishment that is physical occurs across the globe, and its ramifications are only just beginning to be understood. I created this book as both a method of connecting with others who also have experienced this kind of physical trauma and as a cathartic action in an attempt to forgive my father who earnestly believes that this is the proper way for a parent to teach a lesson to his child. I also hope that readers and viewers who have had similar experiences will

⁴⁰ Text for the book was taken from "Spanking and Child Development Across the First Decade of Life" in *Pediatrics*, published by the American Academy of Pediatrics; authored by Michael J. MacKenzie, Eric Nicklas, Jane Waldfogel and Jeanne Brooks-Gunn; October 21, 2013

appreciate seeing my critique of this sort of behavior as detrimental to one's emotional and physical well-being.

IV.2 Other Emerging Artists Within the Filipino-American Community

Oftentimes, most artists in the United States who focuses on painting Filipino and Filipino American images, are assigned simply as surrogates of masters from any other culture besides their own.

— *Eliseo Art Silva, during an interview with him as the curator of the BUKLOD exhibition*⁴¹

My more recent body of work oscillates thematically, and (admittedly) somewhat haphazardly, between addressing a diasporic condition related to my experiences as a first-generation child and those resulting from my mixed racial parentage. While I may be inexperienced with layering multiple meanings and conceptual construction at times, occasionally subjects do definitely speak out from the page. My imagery makes references not only to traditional, anonymous barong garments that have been industrially produced but also to the works and processes of other contemporary Filipino-American artists. As a whole, our work tends to depart greatly from the older generations of contemporary Filipino or Filipino-American artists, focusing on questions of diaspora, and progressive, social justice ideology rather than religion and boorish installations. Some of the more seminal members in this generation include Sherwin Rio, Joy Mallari, and Daniel Ballesteros. These three artists, in particular, are breaking into the fine art world and becoming the face of contemporary Filipino art both in the United

⁴¹Eliseo A. Silva. "From Filipino Object to American Subject: The Struggle for Filipino American Art." FilAm ARTS, 4 May 2017.

States and abroad.⁴² Due to the relative specificity in which I am focusing my practice, I believe that situating myself conceptually within this field supersedes the need to be situated within the broader field of contemporary art. To be clear, I am not saying that contemporary art is unnecessary, but being instrumental in defining the characterizations of contemporary Filipino-American art takes priority.

In *Gloves* (2017), interdisciplinary sculpture and installation artist Sherwin Rio (b. 1992; Florida, USA) co-opts materials like *piña-jusi* fabric, and silk, traditionally used for making translucent *barong tagalog* to create a pair of airy boxing gloves (fig. 12).⁴³ These delicate pieces of heavily embroidered *piña-jusi* fabric speak about the acceptance of violence within Filipino and Filipino-American communities, and the role that machismo plays in a matriarchal society through the global Filipino community's love of boxing. The importance of using a sport dedicated solely to violence against another is linked directly to the larger acceptance of domestic violence against women that is present in Asian-American communities. As Helen Zia notes, "[t]he absence of an Asian American community outcry against domestic violence and other "dirty laundry" had the paradoxical effect of reinforcing the Asian American's general invisibility."⁴⁴ This is due in part to the idea of the "model minority" which precipitates the myth that Asians as a whole are a more tolerated minority because of the economic and social benefits to the community. The normalization of domestic abuse within Asian households is treated as a

⁴² Due to the generational and immigration periods discussed above, most current first-generation children are within a relatively close proximity in age (Late teens to mid 30s). Coincidentally, most of the first-generation children artists who are emerging in the art world today have little to no critical discourse about their work due to being part of such a young block of artists. They are either still in school, just earning their BFAs/MFAs, or are working outside the bounds of traditional fine art critical circles.

⁴³ Piña pronounced "Pee-nah"; Jusi pronounced "You-see"; image taken from artists website: <http://www.sherwinrio.com/>

⁴⁴ Helen Zia. "Out on the Front Lines," in *Asian American Dreams: The Emergence of an American People*, 237.

part of the foreign culture and allows the white community to turn a blind eye to the rampant domestic abuse issues within their communities. *Gloves* presents the viewers with a very direct confrontation of boxing's inherent violent with the most iconic and recognizable of Filipino fashion. While my work does not engage boxing as a medium, I do recognize the prevalence of domestic violence; specifically, as a method of discipline. My recent artist book *Buckle* (2019) (discussed above), for example, explicitly talks about the damaging effects of physical abuse in the form of spanking on neurological and cognitive growth if experienced between the ages of five and nine.

In addition to similar themes, I recognize and celebrate barong embroidery as a powerful tool to draw viewers into the past. By combining the translucency of over-beaten abaca, another historic barong material, with embedded images from my father taken from photographs shot in the Philippines during the 60s, 70s, and 80s, I aim to create a bridge between the past and present. In my recent piece, *Untitled I (The Water Buffalo)* that was discussed above, I layered a linocut which references traditional barong neck embroidery over a cut-out photo encapsulated in overbeaten abaca, which was deliberately chosen because of its cultural significance (fig. 9).⁴⁵ Historically, abaca was one of the fibers used to make *barong tagalogs*, since it could be processed and woven quickly to produce a semi-translucent fabric similar to *piña*, *jusi*, *jusilyn*, *organza*, and *cocoon* fabrics.⁴⁶ A more contemporary way of achieving this translucency is to make paper with abaca rather than weaving fabric. This is done by beating processed unbleached abaca fibers for approximately eight hours in a Hollander beater and pulling thin sheets, which results in a tissue-like, flesh toned translucent paper.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Also referred to as “Manilla Hemp” in many global markets.

⁴⁶ Jusilyn pronounced “You-See-lyn”; Cocoon pronounced “Coe-Coon”

⁴⁷ This process is called over-beating fibers. Generally, linters and half-stuff only need 2 to 3 hours to be processed into suitable paper making pulp. By beating it for 8 hours, one “over beats” the fiber, which

Amongst the Filipino-American artists currently active in the printmaking community, street artist Joy Mallari a.k.a. Killchoy (b. Texas, US; works in Mexico City) uses bold graphic line work to illustrate mythological events, creatures, and important indigenous symbols.⁴⁸ As seen in her piece, *Mount Mayon* (linocut with hand-coloring, 2019), Mallari illustrates the story between two lovers who are killed during a battle, and the resulting mountain that grew where their bodies lay (fig. 13). Whereas her piece mixed media piece (wheat paste, linocut, and hand painting) *La Ofrenda* (2018) is an installation/street art environment that hangs across a blocked off doorway (fig. 14). A large spider-like deity, who sits across the top of the doorframe, wears a distracted expression while smaller human figures can be seen in various states of adoration down below. A large fire is painted onto the door behind the gate whose fumes and smoke drift upwards to cluster around the spider. Most human beings bear gifts of smaller flames, presenting them to their supposed god in an effort to capture its attention, while a lone face looks towards the viewer with a mischievous smile. Mallari's pieces range in size from just a few centimeters across to large-scale outdoor murals. Each possesses stunning precision of line quality and offers an excellent window into the traditions and ideas of indigenous populations, either from the Philippines or her adoptive home of Mexico.

In a similar technique, the bold graphic linoleum carvings in my own work express a neo-traditional form of barong embroidery, finding inspiration from both the mid-century barongs that my male relatives used to wear, and more modern barongs sold by retailers that carry Filipino clothing today. My carvings mimic the silk lace decorations that adorn translucent *piña*

means that the average fiber length is extremely small, and the resulting fiber is a long draining, high shrinkage fiber that when formed dries with varying degrees of transparency depending on the thickness of the sheet.

⁴⁸ Not to be confused with contemporary Filipina artist, Joy Mallari (b. 1966, Antipolo, Philippines) the surreal portrait painter whose work is commonly identified with the Filipino Figurative Expressionism movement and invokes themes of identity and marginalization in the Philippine community.

fabric, yet retain their distinctive relief printed quality. In *Wardrobe Change* (2019), a mixed media piece with handmade paper, pulp painting, linocuts, and inkjet printing, the delicate positive lines of the linoleum carvings printed on the backside create a muted graphic background for the painterly silhouetted figure who is encapsulated between two layers of translucent abaca paper (fig. 15). On the surface of the sheet, a graphic of Laguna de Baý rests at the figure's feet, while a V-neck tee shirt collar at the top of the piece mirrors the neckline of the embroidery pattern that shows through. By incorporating such distinctive iconography, I place the subject (in this case, the pulp painted figure) both within the context of the historical Filipino community, and the contemporary era of fashion with two of the strongest visual cues that relate to each. By positioning the traditional embroidery on the verso of the sheet, I signify that the figure is moving away from the past and moving into the present and into the contemporary through these elements of modern clothing.

Another heavy influence on my current artistic practice is Daniel Ballesteros (b. St. Louis, MO, US, based in Oakland, CA); in particular, his photographic series, *Gold Leaf Trees* (2017) has prompted me to consider the importance of absence and the value of negative space to allow the viewer's eye to rest within a singular piece (fig. 16). In this series, Ballesteros edits out the human elements of photos with gold leaf, resulting in photos of trees surrounded in gold with filigree lines cutting across the picture plane where electrical wires and phone lines once cut across the foliage. These explorations in the value in the absence of information and the removal of human intervention have a direct result in some of the photo editing found in my images embedded between sheets of abaca paper. From the removal of certain figures to the trimming down of the landscape as reference to how a story can be edited by its orator, I draw heavily from the practice of selective information and attempt to control how much of an image the

viewer is able to see. This is even more present in my recent installation work, where I strategically cut translucent abaca sheets with photo inclusions into replicas of *barong tagalog* sewing patterns. In order to use some photos multiple times, I had to take care of where I trimmed and embroidered so as to not let similar parts of repeated photographs show through (fig. 6).

These artists are but a few of those who have influenced my current practice, though they are the ones with whom I most closely associate and to whom I look. Within the cannon of contemporary art, Filipino-American artists are almost nonexistent, yet I believe that the people outlined above will work their way into more mainstream circuits and continue to represent their heritage on a global scale. Being a member of this fledgling community is both a blessing and a curse as we are all present on the forefront of Filipino-American art and identity; however, there is so little published critical discourse surrounding our work and the contexts therein because it is so new.

V. Groups & Exhibitions

There are several groups of Filipino and Filipino-American artists working in New York, California, and Hawaii. Many of these artists, such as Paul Pfeiffer, Eliza Barrios, and Reanne Estrada, are part of multiple art collectives, though the general membership of these groups has not evolved much to accommodate the younger generation of artists who came of age looking at their work. The artists listed above, and many others, can be found in groups including KULARTS, founded in 1985; The Filipino-American Artist Collective, founded in 1990; PAWA—The Philippine American Writers and Artists, founded in 1994; and Mail Order Brides, founded in 1995, and in some of the more recent groups founded after 2000. While these artists are considered the current face of Filipino-American art, and have some critical acclaim, their work tends to focus on more general themes that are more easily accepted into the broader whole of contemporary art. Many pieces are characterized by a distinct lack of personal investment; rather they address religious, colonial, or broader secular themes as opposed to the personal, as can be seen in *Virgin Destroyer* (1995) by Manuel Ocampo or the *Caryatid* series (2016), by Paul Pfeiffer (fig.17-18).

Aside from these individuals and collectives, a new group is gaining traction in St. Louis, Missouri. The Filipino-American Artist Directory (FAAD), founded in 2017 by Isabel Manalo and Janna Añonuevo Langholz, aims to catalogue and connect Filipino-American and Filipino artists. Each year, FAAD publishes a directory of the artists who are involved, and some information about their work. I joined the directory in 2018 and will be included in the 2019 publication, as well as the *Filipino American Artist Directory Book Launch & Pop-Up Exhibition* in St. Louis in May 2019.

Reflective of immigration patterns, many of the other recent Filipino-American artist collectives can be found around the California bay areas. Inks of Truth (founded in 2009), *Kwatro Kantos* (founded 2010), and *Epekto* Art Projects (founded in 2011), contain many of the same artists found in the Filipino-American Artist Directory and the Filipino America Artists Collective, including artists like Justin Pastores, Jana Ercilla, Isable Manalo, Pamela Ybañez, and Alvin Pagdanganan Gregorio, in addition to many Philippine-born, American-based artists like Carlo Ricafort, Rea Lynn de Guzman and Marcius Noceda. Outside of these larger, arts-focused groups, regional and national Filipino cultural associations like Association for the Advancement of Filipino American Arts and Culture (FilAm ARTS) in Los Angeles, California and the Philippine Cultural Foundation, Inc. (PCFI) in Tampa, Florida set the stage for lesser known practicing artists to exhibit their work. Consistent with the lack of critical investments in these smaller exhibitions, there remains very little scholarship work focused on understanding Filipino-American art at its roots.

The recent exhibition *BUKLOD: A Gathering of Filipino and Filipino-American Art and Artists*, at the Croatian Cultural Center in San Pedro, California (May 4-11, 2017), which was perhaps the largest single exhibition of contemporary Filipino-American art, contained work by 50 individual artists.⁴⁹ In an article discussing the origins of *BUKLOD*, exhibition curator Eliseo Art Silva states,

Although many Filipino American artists have been recognized in the art world, their cultural heritage is rarely highlighted. Neither has there been a body of work categorized as Filipino American masterpieces in the 600 years of the history of painting. The artists of *BUKLOD* strive to fill that void with works that “instill culture, dignity and imagination to a cultural landscape that seldom acknowledges and habitually denies them their shared humanity.”⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Bureau, INQUIRER.net US. “Works of Filipino and Fil-Am Artists to Be Exhibited in LA.” INQUIRER.net USA. April 11, 2017. Accessed April 15, 2019. <https://usa.inquirer.net/2793/works-filipino-fil-artists-exhibited-la>.

⁵⁰Eliseo Silva. “From Filipino Object to American Subject.”

The truth of this statement rings true, even two years later, with no larger national or international exhibition focusing solely on the works of Filipino-Americans.

Another recent notable exhibition of Filipino-American artists was *(De)Centered: An Exhibition of Filipino American Artists*, At the WAS Gallery in Bethesda, Maryland (May 13–June 16, 2017).⁵¹ Organized by the Filipino-American Artist Directory to coincide with the launch of their very first publication, this show featured “19 contemporary Filipino American artists from across the country, who are based on both coasts as well as the Midwest and South. The artists included in the exhibition show a connection to both the Philippines and the U.S. in their work and the attempt to remain centered in both places.”⁵²

Between June 22 and July 6, 2018, the Viajeros Filipino Artist Collective hosted an exhibition of 16 Filipino and Filipino-American artists titled *Unang Handog* in San Francisco with the support of the Philippine Consulate General Henry S. Bensurto, Jr. and local Filipino organizations. Viajeros spokeswoman Maria Pureza Escaño further explained the importance of the exhibition, saying,

I came here to support the Viajeros. We need to expose our artists and their works here in San Francisco and other parts of the United States and world as well. As they say, this would just be the start of their entry to the international scene [...] We have artists coming from different walks of life, so you can regard Viajeros as a melting pot of Filipino art. Most of us have the goal of traveling and showing to the world our Filipino soul and culture, to bring about the raising of Filipino pride and morale [...] It is sad that many of Filipinos still think that whatever we have is second-rate. Most Filipinos still have that *Indio mentality*, [...] Most Filipinos do not know that that time and again we have managed to bring home the first prize, the first place, the grand prize not only in arts but in other fields as well.⁵³

⁵¹ “The Filipino American Artist Directory Presents (De)Centered: An Exhibition of Filipino American Artists at WAS Gallery.” Access April 15th, 2019.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ *Indio mentality* means “thinking and acting as a second-class citizen”; Jun Nucum, “Traveling Filipino Artists Exhibit in San Francisco.” *INQUIRER.net USA*, 4 July 2018

These three shows are just a few examples of recent Filipino-American artist focused exhibitions within the United States. These are all generally small in scope and scale, which highlights the need for us as a group to collectively stand up and continue to push for space under the spotlight of the contemporary fine art world. One institution that is currently in the works to do so is the American Museum of Philippine Art Incorporated (AMPAI).

Conceptualized in 2015, this museum aims to be the very first national museum dedicated solely to work produced by Filipinos and Filipino-Americans working in the United States.⁵⁴ As of 2019, it is still only a concept, and is awaiting funding/construction.

⁵⁴ Rafael Rivera Benitez, *Report to the founding meeting of AMPAFI*. American Museum of Philippine Art. San Francisco, CA in 2016.

VI. Looking to the Future

Looking forward, I have a series in mind that I would like to continue working on post-graduation. The project, tentatively titled *Lupang Hinirang*, is a series of broadsides and prints that are collected together in a box set that will be produced during my time at the In Cahoots Residency.⁵⁵ My intent is to gather a collection of literature, both historical and contemporary, and create imagery that exists in dialogue with them. I want to make it a set of at least five poems and five prints that can be displayed alongside each other as a miniature exhibition, and, if time permits, I will extend the series to either eight or ten of each. Images will most likely be produced as multi-block linocuts or woodcuts, with the poems produced in photopolymer or lead. If the laser engraver is still available at In Cahoots Residency while I am there, I would love to work with it to layer images and text underneath and on top of the printed imagery that I produce.

At the moment, I have selected text and phrases from Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tángere* (1887); Ruby Ibara's debut album, *Circa91* (2018); and Mia Alvar's *In the Country* (2015). I am still looking for other poets and writers, and am considering works by José Garcia Villa, Lawrence Lacamba Ypil, and Jeff Tagami. To me, this next project will combine my training as a printmaker with my desire to continue speaking about the notion of what it means to be a Filipino-American. By referencing Filipino literature, I aim to blend my own personal imagery like the belt, my father's silhouette, or my family's mythological creatures with the context provided by other Filipino or Filipino-American ideas. I do not exist within a vacuum, so having the elements from other people in conversation with my own symbology represents the next

⁵⁵ I was awarded a Partial Grant Award for the In Cahoots Residency in Petaluma, CA. This particular residency is a four-week stay (September 4-October 4, 2019).

logical step in pushing forward my body of work. through which I will keep challenging myself conceptually and technically as I help define what it means to be a Filipino-American artist.

List of Illustrations

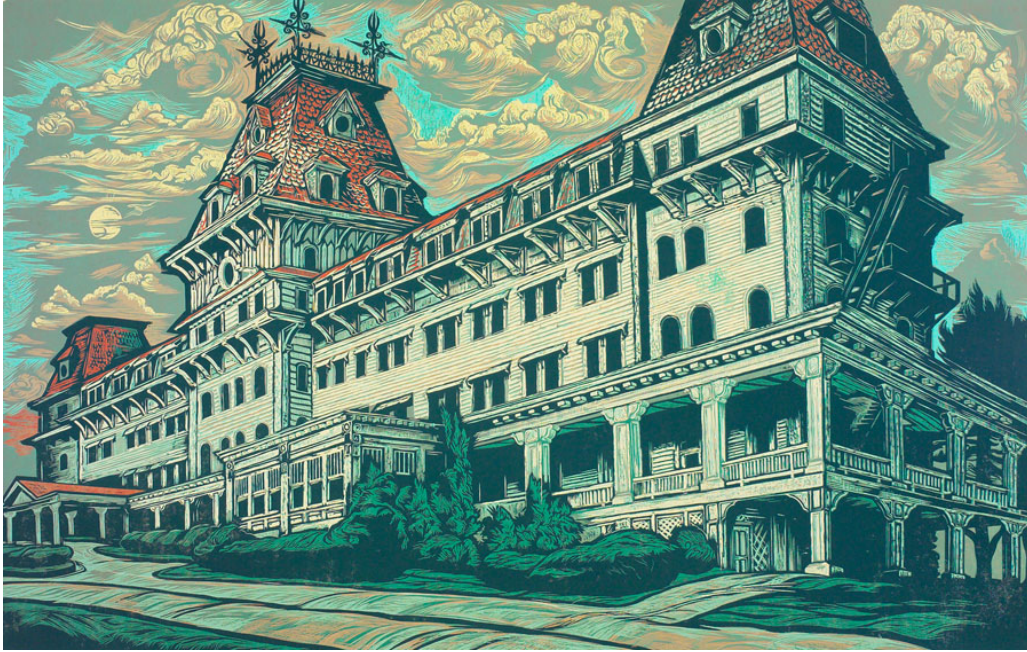


Figure 1. Don Gorvett – *Wentworth by the Sea*; Reduction Woodcut; 29”x46”; Edition 15; 1993

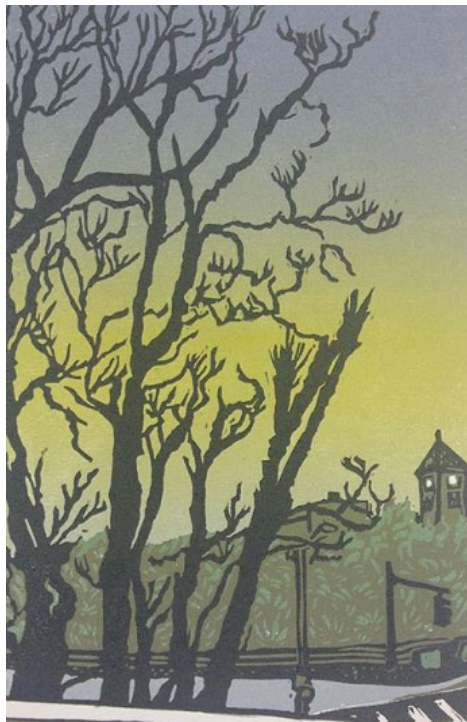


Figure 2. Ben Iluzada - *Clocktower At Dusk*; Reduction Linocut; 6”x9”; Edition of 20; 2017



Figure 3. Ben Iluzada – *Ninuno Espiritu*; Artist Book, woodcuts, linocuts, photo-lithographs, and digital printing on handmade cotton rag paper; 5" x 7" x 91"; Edition of 5; 2018



Figure 4. Photo from the 2018 Iluzada Clan Reunion, in Los Baños Laguna



Figure 5. Ben Iluzada – *Memories of the Barong*; Installation view (May 2019); Linocut and Embroidery on Handmade Abaca Paper with Photo inclusions; 12'x 6'x 4"; 2019



Figure 6. Ben Iluzada – *Memories of the Barong*; Detail; Installation view (April 2019); Linocut and Embroidery on Handmade Abaca Paper with Photo inclusions; 2019



Figure 7. Example of a *Jusi Barong Tagalog*



Figure 8. Ben Iluzada – *Untitled II (Fruit Stall)*; Linocut and Embroidery on Handmade Abaca Paper with Photo inclusions; 11”x 18”; 2018

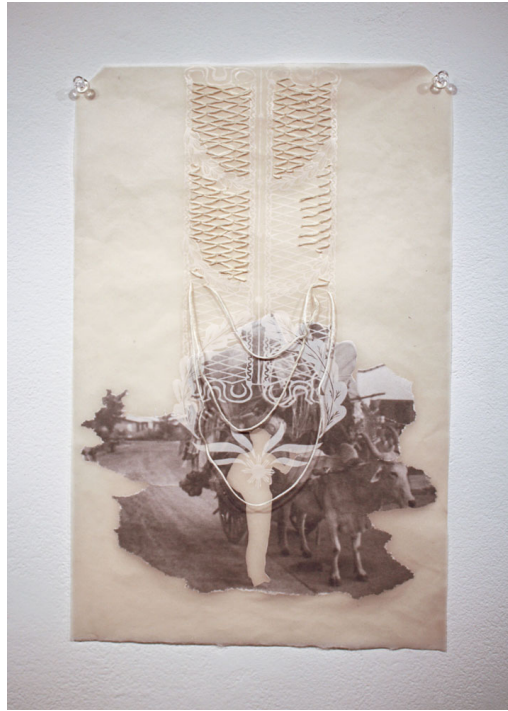


Figure 9. Ben Iluzada – *Untitled I (Water Buffalo)*; Linocut and Embroidery on Handmade Abaca Paper with photo inclusions; 11”x 18”; 2018



Figure 10. Ben Iluzada – *As Brothers Do*; Handmade paper with photo inclusions, pulp blowouts, pulp painting, linocuts, and screen printing on wooden panels; 58” x 10”; 2019



Figure 11. Ben Iluzada – *Buckle*; Artists Book; Linocuts *lead type*, *screenprint*, and *monotype* printed on *handmade abaca paper*, *Japanese Stab binding*; 14.5"x 11.5"; Edition of 5; 2019



Figure 12. Sherwin Rio – *Gloves*; Pina-jusi fabric, silk embroidery; 2017



Figure 13. Joy Mallari – *Mount Mayon*; linocut with hand-coloring; 2019



Figure 14. Joy Mallari – *La Ofrenda*; wheat paste, linocut, hand painting; 2018



Figure 15. Ben Iluzada – *Wardrobe Change*; Linocut and Digital Printing on Handmade Abaca Paper with pulp painting; 11"x15"; Edition of 30; 2019



Figure 16. Daniel Balestros – *Gold Leaf Trees*; inkjet photo, gold leaf; 2017



Figure 17. Manuel Ocampo – *Virgin Destroyer*; Oil on canvas; 1995



Figure 18. Paul Pfeiffer – *Caryatids*; video; 2015

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