

•°; The Wattis Institute

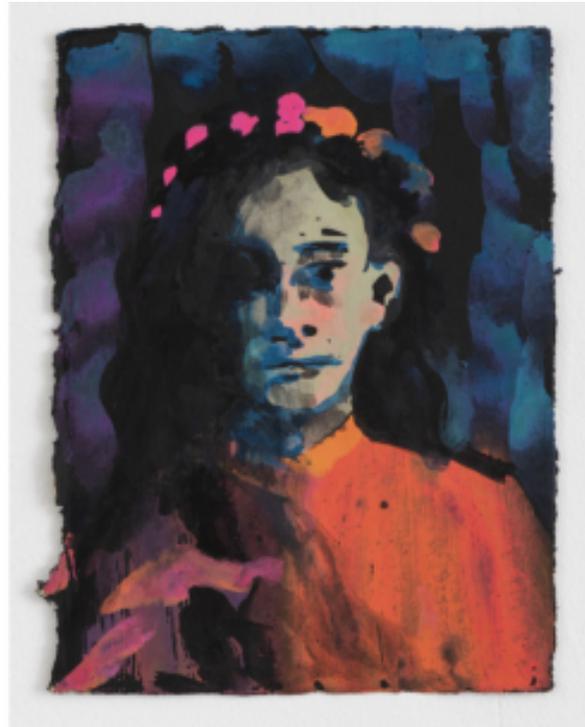
**Maia Cruz Palileo: *Long Kwento***

Curated by Kim Nguyen

Organized by Diego Villalobos

CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art

*September 14 - December 4, 2021*



Maia Cruz Palileo, "Bulaklak (flower)," 2021;  
Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery.

**Pre-Visit Packet**

(Graduate)



→ ***Maia Cruz Palileo*** | they/them  
(b. 1979, Chicago, Illinois)

Maia Cruz Palileo is an artist who works in multiple disciplines and media, including paintings, installations, sculptures, and

drawings. They are based in Brooklyn, New York. Maia's family migrated to the US from the Philippines. Themes in Maia's work are migration and the changeable concept of home.

The troubling colonial history between the Philippines and the US appears in Maia's work. So do the stories they heard from their family about migrating to the US from the Philippines. History and family stories are two forms of narrative. Maia infuses these narratives using both memory and imagination. When stories and memories are subjected to time and constant retelling, the narratives become questionable, bordering the line between fact and fiction.

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→ **Artist Statement on *Long Kwento***

Influenced by the oral history of my family's arrival in the United States from the Philippines, as well as the colonial relationship between the two countries, my paintings infuse these narratives with memory and care. Figures appear and disappear in lush landscapes, domestic interiors, and colonial structures. Deep blues and reds suggest dark realms where superstition, myth, and history blur. Evoking a hybrid sense of place, they serve as metaphors for migration and assimilation.

In 2017, at Chicago's Newberry Library, I researched Damián Domingo's watercolor album, Isabelo De los Reyes' *El Folk-lore Filipino*, and the Dean C. Worcester photographic archive. The Worcester archive was commissioned by the US government to document the imperialist project of William McKinley's "Benevolent Assimilation" and Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden". Together, these sources presented an image of Filipinos constructed through native eyes and through the eyes of the other.

I was drawn to the people in the pictures and felt the impulse to remove them from this historical framework. With the detailed and loving care of Domingo's watercolors in mind, I drew figures, plants, and other elements from the archive. Then, I cut out each drawing, creating a new library of cutouts: people, animals, foliage, moons, and mountains. The pieces were then placed in various arrangements and recorded via graphite rubbings. This process allowed for the cutouts to be combined into potentially infinite visual narratives and led to the generation of full color oil

paintings.

Improvisation through color and composition mimic the spontaneous manner in which oral histories are recounted. Figures mingle with specters with defiance and gentleness. In contrast to the heavily captioned US photographic archive in which a westerner claims a singular narrative about a group of people, these paintings seek to resist such categorization, with agency, without explanations or captions.

→ View the educational [video](#)

→ ***For additional reference: about the history of the Philippines***

The history of the American colonization of the Philippines is troubling, complicated, and ongoing. Multiple social and political groups flourished from the 1st millennium in the region that is today the Philippine Republic, across the three major island groups of Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. The first colonial political structure in the region was forced through Spanish colonial rule, which lasted from 1565–1898. In 1898 Spain was defeated in the Spanish-American War and the Philippines became a territory of the United States, which also used force to maintain control and suppress uprising and attempted revolution. Japan occupied the Philippines from 1942–1945, during World War II. The US Military took power again at this point. In 1946, the Philippines gained formal political independence from the United States. However, ongoing repression by the United States is still exercised through economic, political, and cultural means. For instance, inequity and the suppression of indigenous and national cultures are perpetuated through the exploitation of workers in American-owned sweatshops and via pro-American policy that continues to be favored by the Philippine state.

## Discussion Questions

Before your visit...

1. What histories do you carry within you? Do they entwine, conflict, ask for reconciliation?
2. Do you ever seek to compare these personal histories with documents or points of view external to your own memory? If so, how and where?

During your visit...

3. What is the experience of the show like for you? What do you notice, feel drawn to, what questions arise?
4. What do you notice about the treatment of figures/subjects/environment in the works?

After your visit...

5. How does this handling of archival material as source and inspiration compare to other artists who work with archival material?
6. Does traditional Western temporal lineality fail to capture your experience of, relation to, or placement in time? If yes, how so?