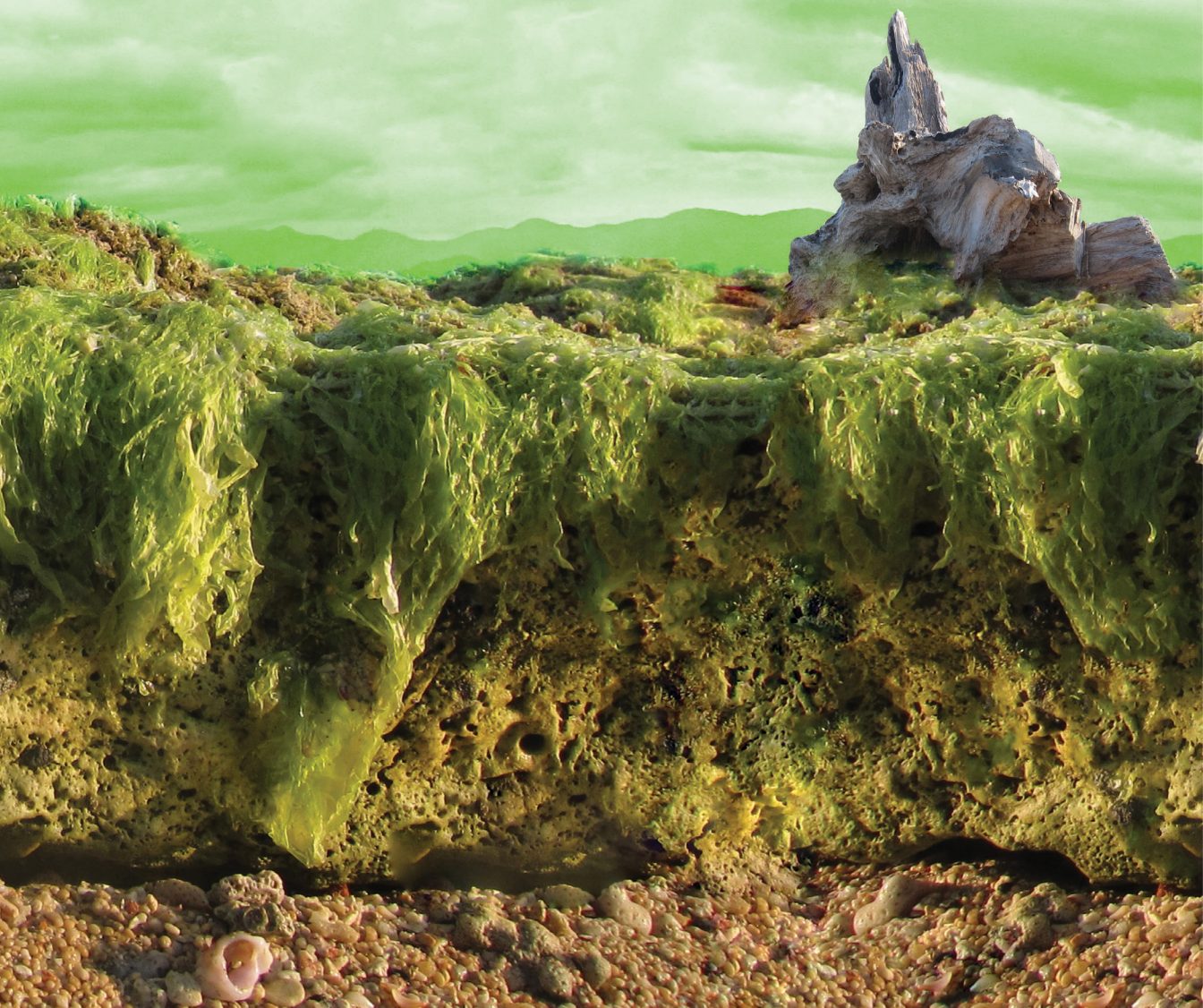


# THE VEXED CONTEMPORARY

26 AUGUST - 21 NOVEMBER 2015



## Pio Abad

Born 1983, Manila  
Lives and works in London

**105 Degrees and Rising**, 2015  
Inkjet on matte vinyl wallpaper  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

**Love Means Never Having  
To Say You're Sorry**, 2014-2015  
Four dummy CCTV cameras  
Seashells  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist and Silverlens

Working across sculpture, installation, photography and print, Pio Abad employs strategies of appropriation to reveal the social and political implications of objects. Abad mines alternative or repressed historical events and draw out threads of complicity between other incidents, moments or people. Often taking on the form of domestic or decorative accessories, such as wallpaper, his artworks glide seamlessly between these combinations with their leftovers. Abad received Bachelor's degrees from the University of the Philippines and Glasgow School of Art, and his MFA from the Royal Academy of Arts in London. He is currently a resident artist for Gasworks, London, UK.



## Poklong Anading

Born 1975, Manila  
Lives and works in Manila

**Dragon Kite**, 2009  
Acrylic, charcoal and gold pen on wood  
183 x 183 cm (3 pieces)  
244 x 244 (1 piece)  
Courtesy of the artist and 1335 Mabini

*Dragon Kite* is a series of paintings by Poklong Anading. Best known for his sculptures, videos, and installations made of found objects sourced from his

immediate environment, Anading's paintings explore the gesture of mark making. Seemingly random and opaque, textured strokes scrawl the surface of the canvas almost in a stream of consciousness style that alternates between episodes of tension (charcoal) and release (gold). He has participated in the Gwangju (2009 and 2012) and Jakarta (2009) Biennales. In 2013, Anading's *Counter Acts* series was included in the exhibition *No Country: Contemporary Art for South and Southeast Asia*, presented by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum

in New York, which acquired the work into the museum's collection.



## Yason Banal

Born 1972, Manila  
Lives and works in Manila

**Untitled Episode**, 2015  
Chroma key paintings,  
bronze pomegranate,  
transcript on aluminum, website, video  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

Yason Banal's performance-driven practice incorporates a variety of media including installation, photography, sculpture, video, text, curating and pedagogy. However, although these elements are separate entities, he also collectively utilizes them as props to a grander gesture of the spectacle. For *The Vexed Contemporary*, Banal stages a meta reality production inspired by the popular TV series, *Pinoy Big Brother*.



## Victor Balanon

Born 1972, Ilocos Sur  
Lives and works in Quezon City

**Testing the Waves**, 2013  
Stop-motion animated loop,  
in digital video format  
6 minutes  
Courtesy of the artist

Victor Balanon is a self-taught artist working in graphic design, illustration, animation, and film. In *Testing the Waves*

(2013), synchronized blocks dance in a choreographed sequence, syncopated by a gentle, pulsory beat. The visual and the auditory flux in and out of connection, producing a slightly off-balance composition that meet at unexpected intervals. Balanon received his BFA at the University of the East and studied film at the Mowelfund Film Institute. His works have been shown in a variety of group exhibitions in Hong Kong and Singapore. His work is currently part of the *Sound and Sights* show

at the Jewish Museum, New York.



## Lena Cobangbang

Born 1976, Quezon City  
Lives and works in Manila

### ***Flaccid Calm*, 2014**

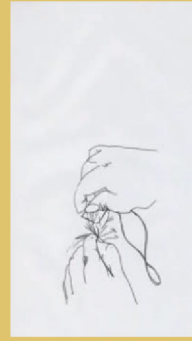
Animation

6 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

Lena Cobangbang is a writer, curator, production designer, arts administrator, and performance artist. Her work encompasses a wide range of media including photography, video, installation,

sculpture, and animation that are often introspective and registers the artist's inner self. *Flaccid Calm* (2014) is an intimate portrait of vulnerability and self-doubt in which the quick-paced gesture of sewing simultaneously convey a sense of security and fear of seclusion. Collaboration with other artists is also an integral component to her art practice, which has included the artist collective, Surrounded by Water; with Yasmin Sison as Alice and Lucinda; and currently with Mike Crisostomo as The Weather Bureau. She was part of the Singapore Biennale 2008 and was part of a residency in Sanart, Vietnam.



## Louie Cordero

Born 1978 Quezon City  
Lives and works in Manila

### ***Pong on Earth*, 2015**

Wood, fiberglass, acrylic paint

Dimensions variable

Collection of Anton and Lisa Periquet

Louie Cordero's paintings are informed by the colonial history of the Philippines. Depicting monsters and zombies from

Filipino mythology, Cordero's biomorphic figures reference the eclectic mix of indigenous culture with American, Spanish, and Asian legacies.

*Pong on Earth* (2015) is a ping pong table that was produced with the help of airbrushers of jeepney art, a distinct style that has become the ubiquitous symbol for Philippine culture. His works are pointed commentaries of events in Philippine politics using images taken from local pop culture.



## Leslie de Chavez

Born 1978, Manila  
Lives and works in Lucban, Quezon

### ***Apog*, 2015**

Lime powder, soil

800 x 500 cm

Installation size variable

Courtesy of the artist

### ***When The Medium***

***Killed The Message*, 2014**

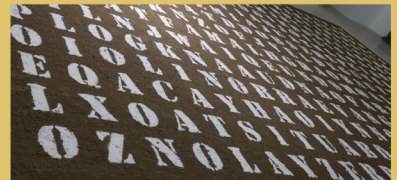
Machine embroidery on canvas

51 x 66 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Leslie de Chavez is an artist whose work often references Philippine history and its relationship to contemporary culture. In *Apog* (2015), a large bed of soil is powdered with letters that are assembled like a word search puzzle. Addressing the perpetual and volatile issue of land and agrarian reform in the Philippines, de Chavez invites viewers to search for the names of the deceased who perished from the Mendiola and Hacienda Luisita Massacres (1987 and 2004 respectively) as a gesture of remembrance. He has had several solo shows in the Philippines, China, Korea and Switzerland and has participated

in notable Bi/Triennials including the Singapore Biennale (2013); 3rd Asian Art Biennale in Taiwan (2011); 3rd Nanjing Triennial in China (2008); and First Pocheon Asian Biennial in South Korea (2007).



## Kiri Dalena

Born 1975, Manila  
Lives and works in Manila

### ***Erased Slogans*, 2008/2015**

120 Lambda prints on rag pearl paper

Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

### ***In Our Own Image*, 2015**

Black and white and color video

30 second loop

Courtesy of the artist

Kiri Dalena is a documentary filmmaker and activist. Her films expose the injustices and abuse of victims and survivors of human rights violations, and are informed by historical research and ephemera. In *Erased Slogans* (2008/2015), Dalena culled the archives of the Lopez Museum and amassed a collection of newspaper photographs depicting protests from the late 1960s-70s. She then manipulated the images in hopes of encouraging viewers to think about the messages lost. Dalena earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Ecology from the University of the

Philippines and studied 16mm documentary filmmaking at the Mowfund Film Institute. Her work is included in the collections of the Lopez Museum, Ateneo Art Galley, and the Singapore Art Museum.



## Kawayan De Guia

Born 1978, Baguio City  
Lives and works in Baguio City

**Bomba (Fall Out)**, 2015  
Mirrors, fiberglass, styrofoam,  
sound, rotating motors  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

Based in Baguio City, Kawayan  
de Guia's interest in the indigenous

culture of the Cordilleras is attributed to his family heritage and is an integral part of his work. *Bomba (Fall Out)* (2015) is part of de Guia's bomb series inspired by a friend's discovery of WW II bombs in the mountains of Benguet and Ifugao. De Guia retells this story using the homonym, "bomba", as a cheeky play on both the explosive weaponry and 70s softcore films. His works are part of several private collections, and the first iteration of "Bomba" is included in the Singapore Art Museum Collection. He was a recipient of the Ateneo Art Awards in 2008 and 2011.



## Cocoy Lumbao

Born 1977, Manila  
Lives and works in Manila

**Untitled (Eclipse I)**, 2013  
HD, Infrared Video  
13: 20 mins  
Courtesy of the artist

**Untitled (Eclipse II)** 2013  
HD, Infrared Video  
3:14 mins  
Courtesy of the artist

Cocoy Lumbao's videos explore the capabilities and limitations of the camera as an ocular proxy. He states, "[I] become blind for the camera to see. I wanted to have the camera take full control of my vision, to not just see or record for me but to also inform me." Shot in the dark, *Untitled (Eclipse I)* and *Untitled (Eclipse II)* (both 2013) emulate a kind of "blindness"; in *Eclipse I*, one may be quick to assume that the child is blind and in *Eclipse II*, viewers can see the braille but are unequipped to read the words. Lumbao received his Bachelor's degree in Film from

the University of the Philippines. He has been shortlisted for the 13<sup>th</sup> Gawad CCP Para sa Sining, short film category and the 2014 Purita Kalaw Ledesma Prize for Art Criticism.



## Patricia Perez Eustaquio

Born 1977, Cebu City  
Lives and works in Manila

**The Quarried**, 2015  
Direct printing on aluminum  
composite panel  
40 x 40 cm each panel (200 panels)  
Courtesy of the artist

**Ruins (Fragment 24)**, 2015  
Lasercutting on mirror  
122 x 244 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

Patricia Perez Eustaquio's sculptures and installations incorporate and merge a diverse range of mixed media materials from craft to industrial. *The Quarried* (2015), a seascape-like rendering composed of a variety of printed decomposed objects on aluminum, lays adjacent to *Ruins (Fragment 24)* (2015), which reads Greek philosopher Heraclitus's theory that everything is in a state of flux. The pairings offers a philosophical contemplation on cycle of life and death. Eustaquio received her BFA at the University of the Philippines. She is a recipient of the Cultural Center of the Philippines' Thirteen Artists Award and Ateneo Art Award. She has exhibited internationally including Singapore,

Malaysia, Thailand, Hong Kong, New York, and Switzerland.



## Ikoy Ricio

Born 1978, Manila  
Lives and works in Angono, Rizal

**Drop Dead**, 2015  
Board game on acrylic  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

Drawing inspiration from daily life, Ikoy Ricio creates objects from everyday materials such as hand-made street ads and house slippers.

In *Drop Dead* (2015), Ricio scrutinizes the subject of life itself and asks: "What if death is the doorway to winning?" Merging his fascination with diseases with his childhood love for games, Ricio produces a board game wherein he collects illnesses and pushes us to achieve a win by dying. He upturns the negative stigma of death into a positive perspective. Ricio received his BFA in Painting at UP where he is currently a masteral candidate at the College of Fine Arts. An accomplished illustrator, he has collaborated

with numerous writers and editors to produce cover and book designs.



## Gary-Ross Pastrana

Born 1977, Manila  
Lives and works in Manila

**Balloon**, 2012  
Gelatin and silver dust  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist

Gary-Ross Pastrana is a Filipino conceptual artist who employs deconstruction as a strategy to reveal new meanings. For example, in *Balloon* (2012/2015),

Pastrana dematerializes silver—a precious metal—down to its minimum unit of measure. By then dispersing it arbitrarily on the museum's windows, the material's value is demonetized and questioned. He thus urges viewers to think about the metaphysical properties of objects beyond their form. He recently completed residencies in Kyoto and at the NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore. Pastrana is a co-founder of Future Prospects Art Space in Cubao and has curated numerous exhibitions in Manila and abroad.

He was part of *The Ungovernables*, New Museum's generational triennial of emerging artists.



## Maria Taniguchi

Born 1981, Dumaguete City  
Lives and works in Manila

**ram dram sram**, 2015  
die cut paper  
60.96 x 86.36 x 20.32 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

Monochromatic, abstract, and geometric are common features found in the minimalist paintings and sculptures of Maria Taniguchi. Prioritizing material form over representational value, Taniguchi's practice is heavily process-based and labor intensive. From meticulously hand drawing each slab in her well-known brick paintings series to firing large blocks of clay, the composition of each part or layer is as important as its gestalt.



## Gina Osterloh

Born 1973, Texas, USA  
Lives and works in Los Angeles

**Drawing For The Camera**, 2014  
Archival inkjet with UV laminate  
134.5 x 78.7 cm  
Private collection

**Dots**, 2012  
Archival inkjet with UV laminate and custom frame  
50.8 x 63.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Silverlens

**Web (Yayoi Kusama Knew This Would Happen)**, 2012  
Archival inkjet with UV laminate  
50.8 x 63.5 cm  
Courtesy of the artist and Silverlens

Gina Osterloh investigates operations of mimesis and perception via the expanded field of photography. Through the use of the camera, along with deliberate placement of the body within her sets, Osterloh actively questions structures of photography, its modes of perception, and the recognition of the signifiers within the image. *Drawing for the Camera* (2014) is a single photograph that depicts a series of free hand, curving line drawings on backdrop paper. To play with the compression of space inherent to photography, she pressed a crease in the minimal paper where wall and floor meet. Osterloh considers her photographs as performances that collaborate and fight against the fixed perspective of the camera. Osterloh received her BA from DePaul University in Chicago, Illinois and her MFA from the University of California in Irvine.



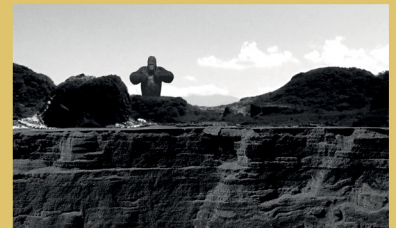
## The Weather Bureau

Founded in 2010  
by Lena Cobangbang  
and Mike Crisostomo  
Lives and works in Manila

**The Nearest of This Side**, 2013  
C-print on aluminum dibond  
63 x 130 cm  
Courtesy of the artists

**The Farthest of That Side**, 2013  
C-print on aluminum dibond  
63 x 174 cm  
Courtesy of the artists

Founded in 2010 by Lena Cobangbang (b. 1976) and Mike Crisostomo (b. 1975), The Weather Bureau utilizes the duo's background in advertising and production design to envision environments in their idealized state of utopia. In *The Nearest of This Side* (2013), a post-apocalyptic scenario reverts to a primordial world while the seaside terrain in *The Farthest of That Side* (2013) is juxtaposed under a celestial green sky. These landscapes are imagined from seemingly failed plans of defunct totalitarian states and rehabilitated in the purest settings and in timeless stasis.



# THE VEXED CONTEMPORARY

## ARTISTS

PIO ABAD

POKLONG ANADING

VICTOR BALANON

YASON BANAL

LENA COBANGBANG

LOUIE CORDERO

KIRI DALENA

LESLIE DE CHAVEZ

KAWAYAN DE GUIA

PATRICIA PEREZ EUSTAQUIO

COCOY LUMBAO

GINA OSTERLOH

GARY-ROSS PASTRANA

IKOY RICIO

MARIA TANIGUCHI

THE WEATHER BUREAU

*In curious cases, thoughts of “back home” quickly return to Europe—or to a kind of Europe, that of the indio out to learn white tricks—where, despite proper matriculation, modernity remained a vexed thing. Documenta 11 is most poignant, and most chilling, and most effective, as a vast mnemonic device for conjuring the necessary but false starts for innumerable demands for equality. False starts, as well as surprise twists and appalling continuities: modernity’s at once liberating and imprisoning logics and effects mess up beginnings and endings; and the erstwhile native can have an unsteady grasp indeed of the relation of art, power, and emancipation.*

—Marian Pastor Roces, Hidalgo and Luna: *Vexed Modernity*

*The Vexed Contemporary* draws from the illuminating essay by Marian Pastor Roces entitled *Luna and Hidalgo: Vexed Modernity*. In the essay, Pastor-Roces threshes out modernity (its intertwining threads of art, power and emancipation) and how this framed the time of 19<sup>th</sup>-century nationalisms in tense juxtaposition with the pull of empire. She places the texts written around Filipino bourgeoisie—especially Juan Luna, Felix Resurreccion Hidalgo and Jose Rizal—as producing the historical burden of carrying out the primary modernist agenda. Rizal himself was the one who initiated this with the following text: *Luna and Hidalgo are Spanish as well as Philippine glories. They were born in the Philippines but they could have been born in Spain, because genius knows no country... is like light, air, the patrimony of everybody; cosmopolitan like space, like life, like God.*

But unlike Pastor-Roces' vexation with the lax analysis of 19<sup>th</sup>-century of these two Filipino artists, the exhibition *The Vexed Contemporary* is open-ended in its assertion. It presents a distressed and frustrated statement regarding the definition of contemporary, a word employed as a catch-all term for any idea considered current. Suhail Malik, in a talk, speaks about the need for art to escape from the contemporary, whether rightly or wrongly.

There are other theories put forward that present contemporary as contextual net, or a future that exists now. Artist Jochen Gerz produced his *Anthology of Art* (2001-2002) where he asked 312 artists, theorists and curators the question: In the context of contemporary art, what is your vision of a yet unknown art?

The artists included in the exhibition are seen to work in a variety of practices that embody the contemporary in art. Their practices lend themselves to global conditions, operating within by using an artistic language that aims to challenge a perennial characterization with identity politics (amongst other colonial and post-colonial baggage) when represented on local and global platforms.

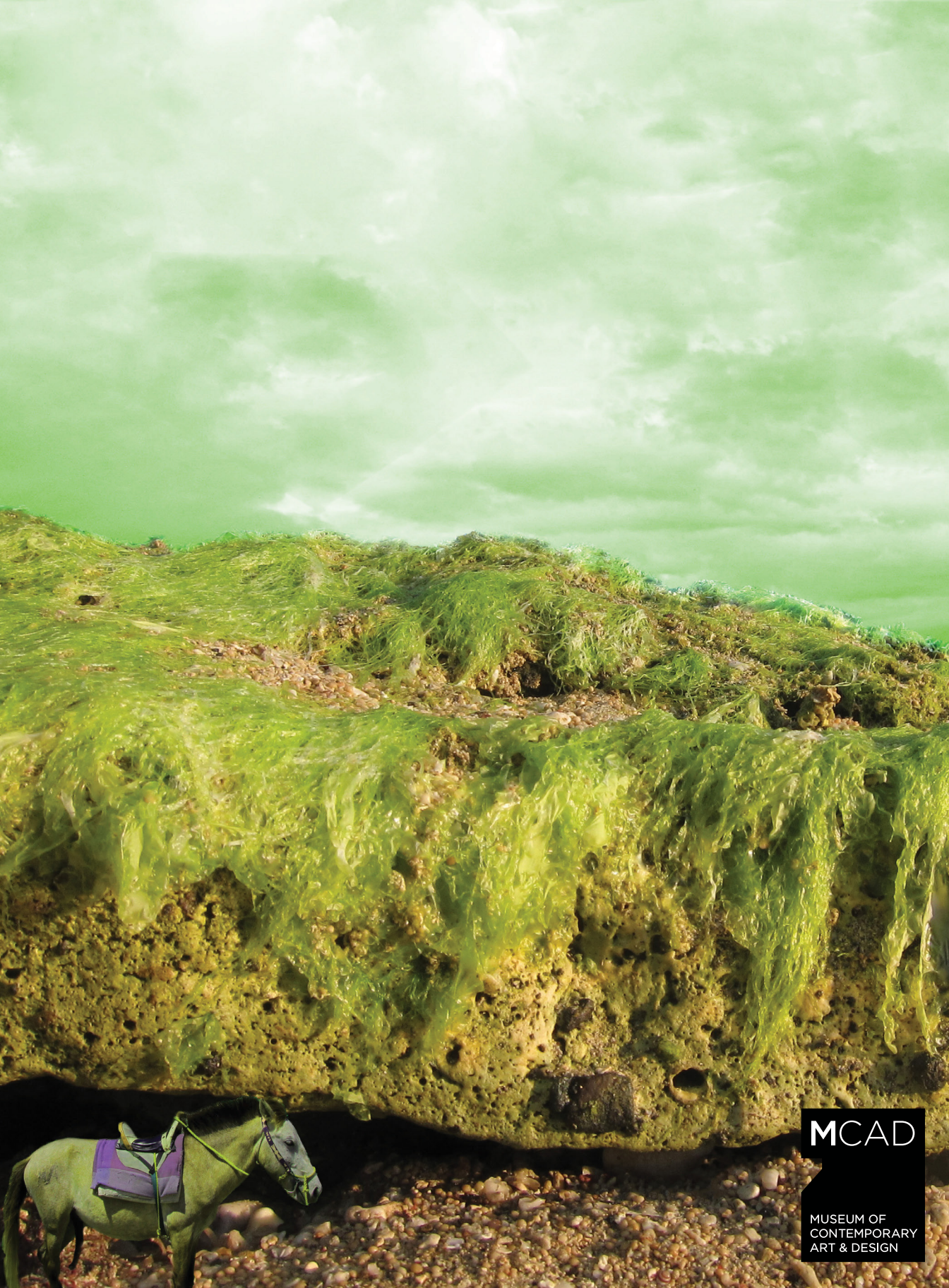
The artists selected for this exhibition cut across practices, and as such inhabit multiple artworlds, perhaps unnerving, as art making can (still) be seen as a purist enterprise. What is obvious though is the singularity of each practice. While some employ conceptualist language for political positions, practice for others jolts the fresh air of pop within the lines of their objects and images. The language of abstraction also wonderfully, and surprisingly, persists in the most unlikely of media. In some works the slippage between pop culture and politics encourages thoughtfulness regarding our ability to discern between the two in the age of 21<sup>st</sup>-century blurring.

While the exhibition presents 16 Filipino artists, the exhibition does not wholly speak to the vexations of the contemporary in Filipino art, but to the wider question as to how representations can be made in the local, the global and the spaces one finds in between within the art world. Perhaps the answer may not be in the spaces of the centre-periphery binaries. Answers may lie in the questions themselves, which may perhaps engender more questions and so forth.

How do contemporary art processes produce such multifaceted paradigms across the world? How do artists tread the precarious balance of a global practice without falling into the mode of essentialism? How does art deal with the contemporary to produce meaningful images, narratives and/or critique?

In the end, we can only deal with the contemporary as an experiment, one whose conditions and production are so peculiar that one can hardly pin it down, much less define it. Its shifting site—as a word, an idea or even as a period—is a cause for much consideration, of even a very certain vexation.





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