

artistic statement

Lizza May David is interested in gaps and silences in personal and collective archives and experiments with forms of activation or disturbance through abstract painting. She navigates through affects and moments that elude representability, leading to experimental approaches for the very same reason. She does not assume the existing binary simplifications of the world, but rather thinks relationally in crossroads, turning points, overlapping and branching out, finding further expression in collaborations, architectural interventions or installations.

Lizza May David (b. Quezon City, Philippines) lives and works in Berlin and studied at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Nuremberg, the École nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Lyon (France) and at the Berlin University of the Arts.

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May narumduman ka didi / Do you remember something here?

2022, 180x280cm, acrylic and oil on canvas

Chains of Interest, ifa Galerie Berlin, 2022

Das Einsummen „mmmmmm“ markiert den Klang vor dem Gesang, einem Zustand des Werdens, welches das anfängliche Erinnern markiert. Grüne Pinselstriche, die an eine Blätterlandschaft erinnern, formieren sich zu Buchstaben, zu Wörtern des Erinnerns - Erinnerst Du Dich an etwas hier?



NegativeSpace - Photographic Collection of RJM / Hasenkamp Archive

2021, 160x128cm, acrylic on shaped canvas

interventions in cooperation with the Rautenstrauch-Joest Museum Cologne

exhibited at „Routes of Empathy“ Haunt Berlin, 2021

Welche Farben haben Archive? Als Ausgangspunkt für NegativeSpace dient der Besuch des temporären Foto-archivs des Rautenstrauch-Joest-Museums Köln. Dort sind 3781 SW-Fotografien aus den Philippinen zu finden, die von dem Händler Georg Küppers-Loosen vor über hundert Jahren nach Köln gebracht wurden. Gemeinsam mit den Künstler:innen Kiri Dalena (Manila) und Jaclyn Reyes (NY) interagieren und intervenieren wir mit dieser Sammlung. Von diesem Austausch inspiriert, richte ich mich mit meinem Beitrag direkt auf das architektonische Umfeld, indem diese Fotografien aufbewahrt werden. Die Maße der Malerei NegativeSpace sind den Aufbewahrungsboxen des Archivs entlehnt.

Lässt sich durch diese Sichtbarmachung der Strukturen Machtkritik ausüben? Die dabei entstehende Fläche nutze ich als Membran, um intuitive Momente, die sich während der Auseinandersetzung mit diesen Fotografien zeigen in farbliche Verdichtungen zu übersetzen. Dabei stellt sich die Frage von der Rolle von Farbe zwischen subjektivem innerem Empfinden und nach kollektivem Ausdruck.

Mein Interesse liegt darin die Oberfläche der Malerei als malerische Membran und als Widerständisches zu verstehen, an dem sich das Private und das Politische miteinander in Verbindung tritt. Und wenn sich dadurch das Verhältnis zur Welt als Körper und gleichzeitig als Gemeinschaftskörper empfindet, kann sie durch Verantwortlichkeit kameradschaftlich verbinden. Welche Rolle haben Farben als Repräsentation in widerständischen Kämpfen, wie z.B. die Farbe Gelb in der People Power Revolution 1986 auf den Philippinen? Kann die Farbe Rosa in den kommenden philippinischen Wahlen 2022 neue Hoffnung generieren und eine Pink Revolution entfachen?



Bahala Ka [What do I know?]

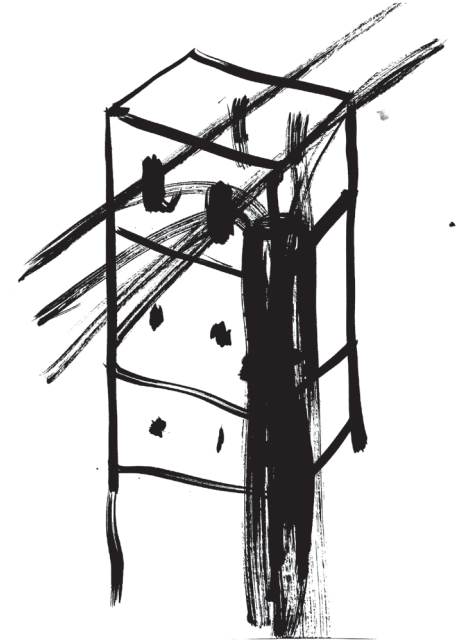
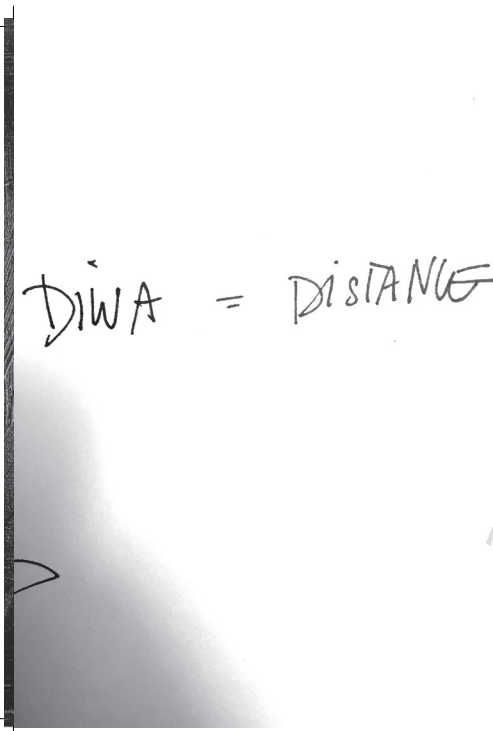
2020, Kunstverein Hildesheim, Germany

In her solo exhibition Bahala Ka [What do I know?], Lizza May David shows small and large-scale oil paintings, inspired by texts on precolonial Philippines. Going beyond visual representation, her paintings suggest imaginations of non-time/-spaces, and are re-located through a dialog with the element of air, circulating through the architecture of the Kehrriederturm.

Out of an examination with the Western canon of art and the production of knowledge as well as questioning the academic production of knowledge, Lizza May David has also developed works in 2020 in Manila for the exhibition Untitled Painting Nr. 1-∞, which addresses the concept of not-knowing as well as the endlessness of space in relation to the body. She based this work on images produced by the Philippine earth observation satellites "Diwata-2", a name which means "Shepherd of the Heavens" in Philippine mythology. In the exhibition, the artist unites an examination on the perspective of the gaze (from above, mediated mechanically) with experiences of subjectivity in painting. Her pursuit of not-knowing/the Unknown is therefore to be understood as an important starting point and focus in her works.

The exhibition title is composed of a reference to not-knowing ("What do I know?") as well as the expression "Bahala ka", which can not only indicate a large number (Bahala: one hundred million) but can also mean "I leave it to you" (Bahala ka).^[1] An expression that through its ambiguity, is telling of precolonial mathematical numbering as well as the measurement of value and attributions of social responsibility.

[1]"Bahala" is translated from Tagalog of the 16th century to "one hundred million" (Noceda & San Lucar, 1754, cited by Jean-Paul G. Potet). According to Ricardo Manapat, for numbers that are more than one hundred million, one says "Bahala ka" ("I leave it to you") (Francisco Blancas de San Jose, Arte y reglas de la lengua Tagala, 1610, cited in Manapat's Mathematical Ideas, 332). "Bahala" also means "God of the Heavens" in the creation story of Luzon, and references its Sanskrit origin as "bhará" (=responsibility, weight, burden).



Bahala Ka [What do I know?]

2020, Kunstverein Hildesheim, Germany



Untitled Painting #1 - ∞

2020, 1335Mabini Gallery in Manila, Philippines

Out of the ruins of modernity emerges a signal of light: the non-human entity Diwata leaves polygonal traces, turns the forms of satellite solar panels into dysfunctional abstract visions, accompanied by a rhythm of gesture making. A minimal note extracted and put into scale, transforming into subsonic frequencies, a memory of stargazing.

The exhaustion of fuel machines, composing soundscapes of constant alert, lulling each other into the sleep of the displaced. Abundance and debt playing the never-ending game between dream and reality. What she knows operates as violence, a cruel gaze, addressed only to the sincere ones. - lmd



1-2-3-DIWATA[∞], each 42x29cm,
oil on wood panels, 2020

Untitled Painting #1- ∞
2020, 1335Mabini Gallery in Manila, Philippines



4-DIWATA", 42x29 cm,
oil on wood panel, 2020

Untitled #3-5,
63,5 x 101,6 cm
oil on shaped canvas, 2020

metal structure, found object from
Grand Boulevard Hotel

How Many Seas Will You Swim?

26'36" Videoloop, 2019

Lizza May David & Gabriel Rossell-Santillán

Installation with single-channel video and wallpaper

Brunei Gallery - SOAS University, London

Inspired by chants and myths from Mexico and the Philippines, *How many seas will you swim?* displays David and Rossell Santillán's ongoing exploration of the ocean as a spatial dimension and relational point of view.

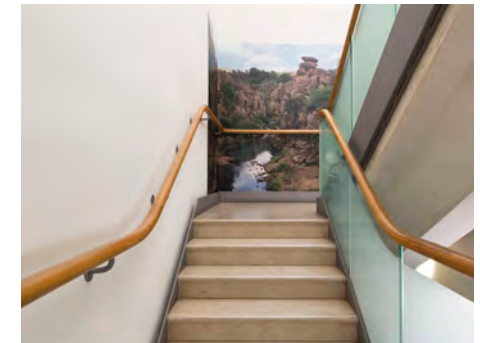
Trailing through the Brunei Gallery site—starting within the Foyle Special Collections Gallery, moving down the gallery staircase before situating itself in a darkened cove under the stairs themselves on levels 0 and -1—the artists follow traces of the Bauhinia orchid tree, using it to speculate upon trade relations during New Spain.

Bridging the natural with the spiritual, among the many tropes they explore is the figure of the Binukot, a noblewoman and spiritual guide of the Panay Bukidnon people in the Visayas region of the Philippines. Mysterious, as they are secluded from the common folk, the Binukot are first chosen among the most beautiful offspring of the nobles, then hidden from the sun, their feet not allowed to touch the ground. Binukot are tasked to memorise the genealogy of their families and commit to memory the traditional folklore only handed down from generation to generation by spoken word. Only the Binukot have the honour of memorising and retelling these epic songs and stories as they have no written form. The Binukot are living vessels to their peoples' histories, embodying memory, becoming archives.

Working from their own artistic and cultural backgrounds, their installation intuitively follows visual appearances, indigenous stories, archival materials, daily news, and dream-like states in order to sketch a dispositif for alternative knowledge and for unravelling multi-layered concepts of time.



exhibition view



exhibition view



video stills



L-Stellen

2018, Hamburger Bahnhof

Performance Workshop im Rahmen der Ausstellung
Hello World - Revision einer Ausstellung

Ausgehend von einem „L-förmigen“ Objekt, wird der Bezug zwischen Besucher_innen, Architektur und den Kunstwerken analysiert und verhandelt. Das Objekt wurde von der Künstlerin in Anlehnung an ein Objekt aus einer philippinischen Sammlung gestaltet. Gemeinsam mit der Kunsthistorikerin Dr. Eva Bentcheva werden Hintergründe des Objektes erörtert und eine Performance entwickelt.



L-Stellen, performance by Lizza
May David at Hamburger Bahnhof, 29
July 2018. Photographs by Lizza May
David and Trinkä Lat



UMWELT

2015, Galerie Duemilla, Manila, Philippines

Performing the tropic

Exhibition text by Lisa Ito

Lizza May David's fifth solo exhibition of new works reflects on how the encounter with the tropical is likened to utopia: an ideal and othered state. Utopia exists in the imagination as an elusive condition; conversely, the artist explores the idea of the tropics as social construction, with its attendant stereotypes, tropes, and possibilities. Titled after the German word for 'environment', Umwelt begins with the artist's exploration of the affective qualities of nature: proceeding from her own physical response as a painter to the "plurality of beauty" represented by the color green, in particular. Her own transnational background (born in the Philippines and based in Berlin) may have provided the conceptual and sensory impetus to bridge the distance between the contested notion of paradise and its translation into contemporary painting. (...)

Animal Look, 2015,
C-Print, 60x80cm
ausgestellt in Galerie
Zimmermann-Kra-
tochwill, 2016



Exhibition view, Das Urbild, 2015,
oil on canvas; Jungle Fever, 2015,
C-Print, 60x80cm

ARTIST UNKNOWN

2014, Installation Inside: Photographs of archived paintings, Curtains, Canvas; Installation Atrium: 7 Tarpaulins

In ARTIST UNKNOWN, Lizza May David works with a marginal aspect of the CCP Visual Arts Collection: the unclassified works. Established during modernization efforts of the postwar era, with an emphasis on the seventies and eighties, the CCP Visual Arts Collection consists of more than 1000 artworks. David focuses on the 43 works in the collection that are listed as 'Unknown' in the categories of 'Artist', 'Title' and 'Year of production'.

Exploring the syntax and grammar of an "exhibition", the artist experiments with "installation", and "display", investigating the potency of an institutional space, and thereby its architectural framework.

The installation deals with in/exclusion, visible/invisibility of cultural knowledge. It plays with the visitor's expectation of what can or cannot be included in a museum collection. Detached from expectations of the "artist name" and its novelty, David developed an alternative reading approach to exacerbate the visual language of tradition. Art history has generally been taught on the basis of the history of works of art, their formal characteristics and materials, and the circumstances that contributed to their coming into existence.^[1] Works of art are exhibited according to a determined spatial grammar. The architecture used in the interiors of most exhibition spaces tends to privilege a certain type of art, mostly paintings or sculptures and architecture is constructed to suit the exhibition of painting and sculpture.

In ARTIST UNKNOWN, curtains are installed at the track lights that are conventionally used to hang spotlights for exhibited art works, blank canvases invite engagement as to what images need belong. The documentation process as photography is being displayed itself. A selection of documented paintings show methods of parallel tracks to modernist forms. What can we discover in reading the visual language of Philippine Modernity? What kind of potency does institutional critique play in the construction of art and artistry in the complex formation of identities?^[2]

Excerpt of text by Lian Ladia together with Lizza May David.

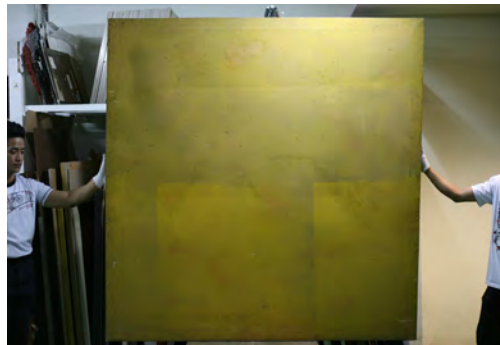
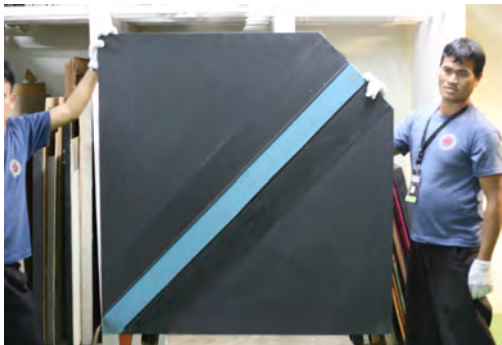
[1] Bartomeu Mari, "The Tasks of Curating", *Manifesta Journal* No 7, 2009.

[2] Flaudette May Datuin, "Imaging/Restaging Modernity: Philippine Modernism in An/Other Light", *Perspectives on the Vargas Museum Collection: An Art Historical and Museological Approach*, 1998.

Right: Dokumentation images of unclassified works



Right: Exhibition view/ Outside Atrium



ARTIST UNKNOWN Documentation images of unclassified works; the photographs were exhibited in the gallery