

Susan Hobbs

Patrick Cruz

- 1987 born in Quezon City, Philippines
2005 BFA, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
2010 BFA, Emily Carr University of Art + Design, Vancouver
2010 Certification, Pochinko Clowning, Vancouver
2016 MFA, University of Guelph, Guelph

Selected Solo Exhibitions

- 2023 *Two Rubies Make Fire*, Edoweird Gallery, Quezon City, Philippines
2021 *Kitchen Codex*, Society of Northern Alberta Print-artists, Edmonton
2020 *mga balakid sa buhang liwayway (obstacles at dawn)*, Gallery TPW, Toronto
2019 *Ghost Collection*, KRETS x Whose Museum, Malmö, Sweden
lips of one thousand nine hundred ninety-six teachers, Galerie Du Nouvel-Ontario, Sudbury
Boardroom, Forest City Gallery, London
2018 *Surrender to Mastery*, Regart Centre D'Artistes En Art Actuel, Quebec City
By What Signs Will I Come To Understand, Franz Kaka, Toronto
people without property, Mo_Space, Manila
Bed Rock, Duplex, Vancouver
2017 *Titig Kayumanggi (Brown Gaze)*, Plug In ICA, Winnipeg
Other-portraits, with Gabrielle L'hirondelle Hill, Stride Gallery, Calgary
Quarantine of Difference, Wil Aballe Art Projects, Vancouver
2016 *Archeological Apathy*, 8eleven, Toronto
Low-Class Minimalism and The Gentrified Amateur, Project Pangee, Montreal
Bulaklak ng Paraiso (Flower of Paradise), Centre A, Vancouver
2015 *Goose Egg Sanctuary*, Pablo, Taguig, Philippines
Brown Ninja: Ways of Moving, Project 20, Quezon City, Philippines
2014 *Electronic Birthstone*, Dynamo Arts Association, Vancouver
Bite the dog that feeds you, Yactac, Vancouver
2013 *Westcoast Maximalist*, Sunset Terrace, Vancouver
Payasong Kalye (Street Clown), Light and Space Contemporary, Quezon City, Philippines
2012 *BirthofaSeagullschewedbyacrowingoodstanding*, Small Gallery, Vancouver
2011 *Yin Yang Temple*, Unit/Pitt, Vancouver
forecast situation, Lucky's Gallery, Vancouver
2010 *Concrete Mirage*, Shudder Gallery, Vancouver
teh, with Simon Redekop, Blim, Vancouver
Made in the Philippines, WOO Gallery, Vancouver
2009 *Tit of a Rainbow*, Hotel, Vancouver
2004 *Kahayupan sa kagubatan ng bulbolania*, SFAS, Ortigas, Philippines

Selected Group Exhibitions

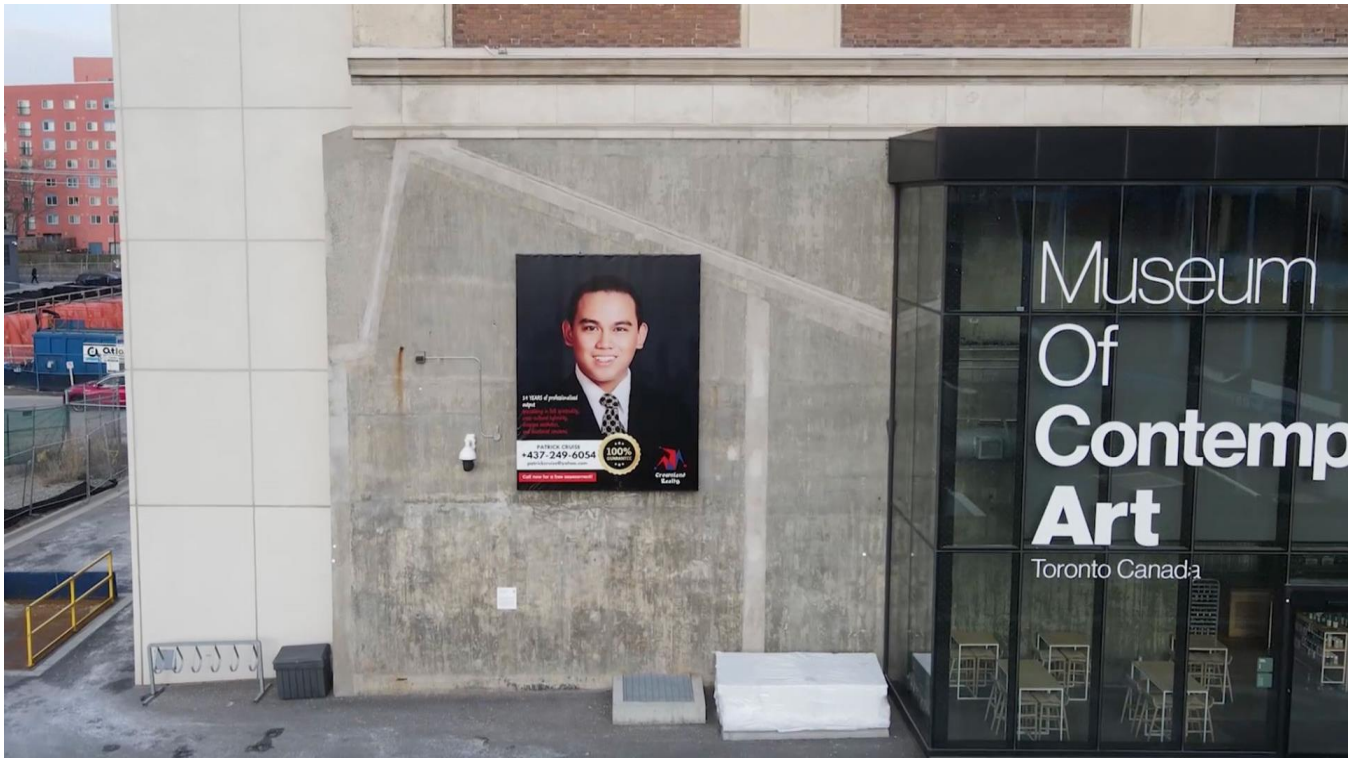
- 2023 *Kaon Na Ta!*, Iloilo Museum of Contemporary Art, Iloilo, Philippines
Where have I arrived?, Art Museum, University of Toronto, Toronto
2022 *X Avant XVII: Namamahay (to dwell)*, Music Gallery, Toronto

- 2022 *Exiles From The Future*, Pumice Raft, Toronto
Hasten Slowly, Afternoon Projects, Vancouver
X Marks the Spot: Filipinx Futurities, Gales Gallery, Toronto
13 Artist Award, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila
- 2021 *Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo*, Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver
Pasapkedjinawong, Mackenzie Art Gallery, Regina
- 2020 *Technical Difficulties*, Art Metropole, Toronto
Every Little Things, Peanuts Gallery, Vancouver
Emotion Sickness, Pinto Art Museum, Antipolo, Philippines
Division of Labour, Art Gallery of Burlington, Burlington
- 2019 *Air Light Time Space*, Pablo, Taguig, Philippines
Common Place: Common-Place, Art Museum, University of Toronto, Toronto
Eleventh Avenue Expo, 11 Ave, Regina
Pavikan Dashline, Pundido, Makati City, Philippines
Alimentary, Obrera Centro, Mexico City
Pavikan 5: Deuteronomy, Mono8 Gallery, Manila
Transparencies II, Fedlfünf, Berlin
Bending Towards the Sun, YYZ Artists' Outlet, Toronto
Words bounce, Nanaimo Art Gallery, Nanaimo
How far do you travel?, Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver
Transparencies - Prelude I [0.3,y,0.75], Gallerie Mitte, Bremen, Germany
- 2018 *Forward Motion*, Museums and Small Arms Inspection, Mississauga
It can only be this place, Dorris McCarthy Gallery, Toronto
An Assembly of Shapes, Oakville Galleries, Oakville
Lessons in Diplomacy Against Diplomacy, Art informal, Manila
Earth Has Wet Dreams, Balituk Beachfront, Baler, Aurora, Philippines
Dead Horse Revival, Project 20, Quezon City, Philippines
Reinterpreting Vic Delotavo's posters, Vargas Museum, Quezon City, Philippines
Second Sight, Artery, Quezon City, Philippines
- 2017 *Every. Day. Objects. Gifts By Artists*, Art Metropole, Toronto
Don't worry, it's just another white exhibition, Bunker2, Toronto
88 Artists From 88 Years, Michael O'Brian Exhibition Commons, Vancouver
Thing Object Stuff, Galerie Roberto, Manila, Philippines
Digging for Fire, Art Anton, Pasay City, Philippines
Jungle Chaka, Artery, Quezon City, Philippines
Thinking Forward, Looking Back, Centre A, Vancouver
Aliens vs Robots, Artery, Quezon City, Philippines
Survival Guide, Art Gallery of Alberta, Edmonton
- 2016 *and, something like fire dancing*, Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto
A Viewing Room, Susan Hobbs Gallery, Toronto
When the institute fell over, Queen Square Gallery, Cambridge
Melted City 3, Blanc Gallery, Quezon City, Philippines
- 2015 *Auto Feeling*, Katzman Contemporary, Toronto,
- 2014 *The Vending Machine*, Vastermalmsgallerian, Stockholm, Sweden
1st Paperweight Biennale, Maillardville Cultural Appreciation Society, Vancouver
So it goes, Boarding House Gallery, Guelph
Destroy 3000 years of culture, Post Gallery, Quezon City, Philippines

- 2014 *Through the trap door*, VIVO media arts center, Vancouver
Radiation, The Art Center of Chulalongkorn, Bangkok
- 2013 *Dark Side of the Sun*, Art Informal, Mandaluyong, Philippines
Pagan Formula, LSC, Quezon City, Philippines
- 2012 *Welcome to Sax island*, Or Gallery Berlin, Berlin
Emergent, Surrey Art Gallery, Surrey
Ohne Titel, The Crucible Gallery, Mandaluyong, Philippines
- 2011 *Collage Drop Outs*, Finale Art File, Makati, Philippines
- 2009 *Earthly Delights*, 221 A, Vancouver

Selected Bibliography

- Abramson, Stacey. *Patrick Cruz: Brown Gaze*. Galleries West, May 2017;
- Chiang, Alison. *Being a part of art and discussion*. The Source, March 2016;
- Docot, Dada. *The Immigrant Experience as Resource for Art Production: Patrick Cruz's Homecoming Exhibit at Vancouver's Centre*. Dada Docot, 2016;
- Durey, Lucien. *Vancouver Report: From One Body to Another*. Canadian Art, October 2017;
- Enright, Robert. *Patrick Cruz*. Border Crossings, September 2017;
- Fathalla, Marina. *Patrick Cruz: Archeological Apathy*. C Magazine, May 2017;
- Gomez, Mariana Muñoz. *In conversation with Patrick Cruz*. Public Parking, November 2017;
- Heyn-Jones, Zoë. *ALIMENTARY*. Canadian Art, July 2019;
- Kolver, Anna. *Patrick Cruz*. Border Crossings, December 2018;
- Kong, Yani. *Disorientation and Echo*. Galleries West, June 2021;
- Milbrath, Claire. *A Week of Canadian Painting: Patrick Cruz*. The Editorial Magazine, December 2015;
- Pablo, Carlito. *Artist Patrick Cruz finds echoes of past amid maze of images*. The Georgia Straight, July 2021;
- Rozansky, Chelsea. *Goldfish Memory: Patrick Cruz*. Canadian Art, Winter 2021;
- Sproule, Michelle. *On Alternative Ways of 'Doing&Doing', with Local Artist-Slash-Art-Activist, Dan Siney*. Scout Magazine, July 2023;
- Witt, Andrew. *Painting and Obstinacy*. Peripheral Review, May 2018;
- Zhou, Coco S. *Magic as Pedagogy: Transforming art and self with Megan Hepburn, Patrick Cruz, and Julian Yi-Zhong Hou*. ReIssue, February 2023;
- Zarum, Lara. *RBC Canadian Painting Competition winner Patrick Cruz on immigration, Filipino culture and chaos*. CBC Arts, November 2015.



Patrick Cruz
Crown land
February 24, 2023 – April 30, 2023

Commissioned for MOCA Toronto's ongoing Lightbox series, *Crown land* (2023) is a new interactive work by Patrick Cruz that operates as playful self-critique, as well as to facilitate discussion around the entanglement of artists and arts institutions with the real estate industry, within the legacy of Canadian settler colonialism.

In *Crown land*, Cruz inserts a school portrait of himself aged fifteen into a fictional realtor's advertisement. Adopting the visual language of real estate advertising, Cruz reflects on his own path to becoming an artist; the sleek professionalism taught in art schools and that is demanded by a market-driven art world. The first ever self-portrait by an artist who often rejects figurative representation, *Crown land* proposes that alongside artworks themselves, identity has also become something to be bought, sold and speculated upon.

Cruz interprets MOCA's exterior Lightbox as a billboard, the work's site-specificity suggesting that artists and arts institutions cannot escape context, physical or otherwise. In this way, *Crown land* asks: What does it mean for the art world in Toronto to be so entwined with real estate, especially when the notion of land ownership is so complex? And what impact does this entangled relationship — especially in relation to funding — have on artistic practice and production?

Cruz's self-reflexivity performs the important labour of initiating discourse around these contradictions, acknowledging the role that artists and institutions play as gentrifying forces within our urban landscape.

Magic as Pedagogy: Transforming art and self with Megan Hepburn, Patrick Cruz, and Julian Yi-Zhong Hou



Installation view of Megan Hepburn's *Mystic pools of social housing* (2022), in "Fielding Road," Nanaimo Art Gallery

One morning last October, the waters rolled in a cool breeze as my friend and I stepped on a ferry. We were going to catch the last day of "Fielding Road," a group show at Nanaimo Art Gallery. I knew nothing about it, expecting only to see paintings by Megan Hepburn; I'd recently interviewed her via email to learn about her art and tarot practice. I was wearing my favourite talismanic perfume, attuned to the spheres of Venus, Jupiter, and Mercury — "playful, merry, and literary," reads the product description — smelling of old books and mint. Earlier that day Mercury had stationed direct in its earthy home sign, Virgo.

"Fielding Road,"¹ it turned out, was a collection of responses to the work of Nanaimo writer and artist Peter Culley. Amidst a scene of play where self and world are inextricable, I came upon Hepburn's works: perfumed objects, not paintings. *Of course*. I was delighted.

Hepburn had formulated the scents based on site visits to Nanaimo and Culley's poems. *Mystic pools of social housing* was a pair of black work gloves packed with yellow scented powder, formed into a pouncing gesture. The scent was fume-y, construction-site acrid, with notes of "niblets blackening on the grill," "choking fog," and "worker's graves." A few steps away was *neoprene long-johns*, a pair of white, cowboy-magician gloves filled with black powder, one glove resting on the other, each throwing a sign of the horns. More like the woods than a rock concert, the smell contained notes of "salt-covered pine trees" and "dream teeth." Against a wall further away, clear boxes held black muslin scarves, which viewers were invited to take and wear, carrying two additional scents: *Radar Tinsel* ("half-hard hotdog bun," "discarded lottery tickets") and *alka seltzer stars scattered on blue felt* ("fairy lights," "drowning").

Both pairs of leather gloves lay on triangular tabletops, powder spilling out of them like the decomposed remains of a body. Fragranced gloves were popular in royal courts throughout early modern Europe, the scenting treatment necessary for ridding the leather of noxious smells associated with the tanning process. As an index for class- and race-based notions of hygiene and cleanliness, smell — more so than sight — has an immediacy in how it habituates our bodies to produce certain reactions due to the intricate ways that smell links up with our metabolic processes. To breathe is to be transformed by our environment, a breach of perceived bodily integrity via scent molecules and pollutants, not to mention airborne viruses.

Standing there, though, I wasn't thinking about any of this. The scents pulled me in, washed over me. What happened when I let them do their work on me was anybody's guess. The intellectualizing could wait.

*

The traditions and practices that constellate what we call the New Age movement are, genealogically speaking, a tangled-up, messy bunch. 'Witchcraft' recalls the history of racialized peasant women in Europe being persecuted for their medical knowledge, but today's self-identified witches are likely performing rituals adapted from the high ceremonial magic of the Golden Dawn, a nineteenth-century British secret society composed of primarily middle- and upper-class men. Yoga and meditation have been largely decontextualized from their Hindu and Buddhist religious roots, commercialized into mass-marketable (if not somewhat stigmatizing) categories of self-help and self-care. A knowledge-form like astrology has a multitude of regional-cultural variations, among them 'western' astrology, which itself contains a number of systems and approaches.

Thus, for all the buzz about a recent "occult turn" in contemporary art,² artists tend to have distinctly personal ideas about what magic and spirituality mean to their work. What they do seem to share is a heightened awareness of the dynamics of chance and control in the creative process, as well as a mode of authorship that does not take for granted the idea of a coherent, sovereign self.

For Hepburn, the transformation of plant and animal matter in perfumery is a form of "nature magic." As a child she "felt magic palpably," guided by "feelings of connectedness" among worldly phenomena that erased any line between the cultural, natural, and the supernatural. Being taught the incommensurability of magic and science in school only pushed her further into the occult "realm of openness, doubts, and shadows" and alternate systems of knowledge. This became the context for her interest in perfume, which represents a "fusion of ancient witchy knowledge passed down through generations all over the world," involving "foraging, [...] agricultural knowledge, and very technical, sometimes cutting-edge science."

A hint of mysticism could be sensed in Hepburn's scented-glove sculptures; the triangular, altar-ish tables invoke the numerological significance of the three in many religious and spiritual traditions, esoteric or otherwise. Intertwined with the histories of chemistry and alchemy, the process of perfume-making contains, according to Hepburn, "ritualistic elements" both "practical [and] seemingly esoteric," such as "letting [a blend] sit for exactly the right time."

"Divination [in art-making] is like opening doors or windows," says Hepburn, "to let information, energies, other ways of knowing, or magic come through." Crucially, this magic doesn't come to the artist "out of nowhere or from a being/figure like a god." In this view, the artist is less like an oracle, an annunciator of divine truth, and closer to a vessel, a thing that holds what it gathers; in the holding, emerges a form.

*



Patrick Cruz, *Landscape painting version 1*, (2010-)

The self as a vessel is a non-static self constantly redefined by what it holds and how it gets used. This is the position taken by painter and installation artist Patrick Cruz, whose practice is informed by a school of clown training called the Pochinko method, with its emphasis on “improvisation, spontaneity, and play.” Remarking on the “disruptive nature” of this technique, Cruz notes that it helps him “decenter normative ways of being” through a “kind of repossession of the self.” The embodied, destabilizing vulnerability that clowning conjures is an energetic space — a holding — to bring an audience into.

In his ongoing work *Landscape painting*, of which Cruz has done variations since 2013, viewers walk on the painted floor, using their feet to touch the work instead of assuming a detached gaze, in a subversion of expectations meant to mirror the artist’s sense of displacement as part of his immigration experience. Cruz points out, “If art-making is a ceremony, the viewer is really responsible for completing the ritual.” This is akin to how a vessel extends an offer to be grabbed, filled, emptied, knocked over.

As the “philosophical framework that guides [his] intuitive choices,” clowning has become for Cruz a way to resist and unlearn his art-school training, which privileged the conceptual, “cerebral aspects of making.” This aligns with the perspective of Julian Yi-Zhong Hou, whose work spans various mediums from sound to stained glass. In school, Hou explains, “everything had to be rationalized, and I reached a real limit making work that way.” To work around this limit, he deepened his engagement with tarot as a form of manifestation, incorporating chance in a “direct collaboration with natural forces.”

Cruz and Hou turned to magic to sustain what they loved about making art while wanting to lose the framework — their art-school education — that once provided an understanding for this activity, because said framework now threatened to engulf the thing they loved altogether. Untethering from any structure with which we organize our life’s work is a painful and costly process. Perhaps this is part of why Hou remains cautious about attaching his art to magic, in a relationship he calls

“experimental.” He feels ambivalent, while also grateful, about viewers’ tendency to label his art as talismanic, a sometimes reductive interpretation. Given the market logic of neoliberalism, Hou says, “Spirituality can almost feel like a kind of identity more than a serious pursuit of the truth.”



Julian Yi-Zhong Hou, *Crossroads* (2021), 4488 Juneau St., Solterra Development

The lavishly mutative aesthetic of Hou’s sculptures draws upon the vocabulary of decorative arts, leading to forms both recognizable and obscure. Beyond drawing on the viewer’s knowledge of design history, the key to reading these works seemingly lies in their invocation of images and impressions belonging to a shared reservoir of meaning, or what Carl Jung called “the collective unconscious.” Classic tarot imagery, particularly the Ryder-Waite-Smith deck, is said to be a distillation of this supposedly universal realm of archetypal symbols and associations. These ideas have a powerful hold on New Age thought, despite their entanglement in the racist, primitivist milieu of the nineteenth-century German Volkish movement.

A critical stance, however, does not have to be a cynical one. I practise astrology not because I believe in it, but because it works.³ All three artists I interviewed use tarot to shape their work, approaching cartomancy like a technology that redirects their attention in the making process, or as Hepburn puts it, a mode of “problem-solving.” When Cruz finds himself in a creative block, it’s a magical act, he says, to harness “the ability to bypass the rational mind [...] to have faith that things will work out.” Even though Hou doesn’t “believe things that can’t be substantiated [...] in [his] subjective experience,” he is struck by how symbols in his work show up in his life in an “almost map-like” fashion. What if, disregarding its esoteric connotations, magic is what happens when we get loosened enough to recognize ourselves in the world — in other words, an ordinary attunement to what is?

*

Around the time she received a terminal cancer diagnosis, Eve Segdwick encountered two things: Tibetan Buddhism and textile art. The latter offered her a way out of thinking and writing, activities which “imposed no material obstacles to a fantasy of instant, limitless efficacy.”⁴ In crafting and

making, she was reassured by how materials would “press back so reliably, so palpably”⁵ against any such illusion of omnipotence. Dwelling in “that space of suspended agency” felt wonderful to her, after a lifetime of being “an insane perfectionist.”⁶ Her “fingers were very hungry to be handling a reality, a beauty, that wasn’t [her]self, wasn’t any self, and didn’t want to be.”⁷

Meanwhile, Sedgwick found in Buddhist teachings a nondualist approach to living and dying that clicked into place what she had spent a career thinking towards, an articulation she summed up in the shorthand, “Deconstruction is the theory, Buddhism is the practice.”⁸ This led her to propose a framework for understanding the popularization of Buddhist texts in the United States based on a model of not adaptation, but “recognition/realization.”⁹ This term captured, for Sedgwick, the affective intensities of being caught up in a relation where/when one locates herself in a world, in a moment in time. But it also describes a central tenet in Buddhist thought that perceives neither sameness nor a split between self and other, emptiness and form. In Mahayana traditions especially, realization means something like grasping the ungraspability of all things, in the same way that a mantra both *is* the Buddha *and* only “a finger pointing to the moon,” not the moon itself.¹⁰

“Recognition/realization” seems to me like a useful way to reframe the collective unconscious, which is really referring to what we want from the world to make it appear consistent. More specifically, the language of archetypes fulfills a common desire to participate in the world, and what seems true about it, without other people.¹¹ This is less a critique than an acknowledgment of the often overwhelming, everyday difficulty of being and working with others, particularly when it’s a dominating other who undermines our conditions for flourishing.¹² It’s no wonder, then, that marginalized peoples of all kinds have taken to tarot and astrology to summon the pleasure of belonging to a humanity we’ve long been denied.

“Magic occurs,” Cruz says, “when something gets transformed through the process of interaction or encounter.” Similarly, in her “earth-magic way of thinking,” Hepburn notes that “nothing is created nor destroyed, only transformed.” To be transformed via one’s unconscious is “healing work” according to Hou, for whom divination is about “allowing for hidden desires to guide.” This is another way to say, in New-Age parlance, ‘surrender.’ As a mundane practice and process of learning to be receptive to transformation, magic releases us from the project of performing the liberal model of rational, integrated subjectivity, at which we are always destined to fail anyway. It is a realization that loosens our attachment to the shame of not doing or being enough by coaxing us to just *be*, by cultivating a skillfulness for showing up to the scene of change without having everything or anything figured out. Given the usefulness of magic’s teachings, do questions about belief or validity really matter? If magic in practice demands that we keep recognizing it as a form of life, the same could be said for art, and justice, too: a means as well as an end.

Coco S. Zhou is a writer based on unceded x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tseil-Waututh) territory.

RelIssue, February 2023

Artist Patrick Cruz finds echoes of past amid maze of images

He sometimes uses Filipino titles, as reflected in a current Vancouver Art Gallery show, to connect to his heritage.



Patrick Cruz's "si mabait at si malihim, mga agam agam sa kuro kuro" installation is included in the Vancouver Art Gallery's exhibition titled Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo.

Patrick Cruz says he's sort of joking when he makes a suggestion about his new work at the Vancouver Art Gallery.

He says visitors should bring along a Filipino friend to understand what's going on with the mixed-media installation.

It's called "si mabait at si malihim, mga agam agam sa kuro kuro". It's part of the gallery's ongoing exhibit, Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo.

Some of his previous works carry a title in Filipino—the official language in the Philippines that is based on the Tagalog dialect—and include an English translation. This one doesn't have a version in English.

Cruz obviously had a lot of fun creating the concept, which explains why he was very amused with the first question asked by the *Straight* in a phone interview.

What's his official translation for "*si mabait at si malihim, mga agam agam sa kuro kuro*"?

"Sometimes there are just things that you can't translate," the Philippine-born artist said gleefully.



Patrick Cruz learned art through a western lens
but he's now striving to incorporate a different vantage point.

There's a good reason why, and it's that a literal English translation doesn't even begin to unravel the world informing the work.

One version could go something like, "the kind one and the secretive being: doubts about a point of view".

However, *mabait*, or the "kind one", doesn't refer to a person or perhaps a god. For a number of Filipino speakers, it's slang for rodents or mice.

Cruz recalled his aunt saying, "*Nandyang na yung mabait*," which means that rats are around the house.

It's a clear indication that after centuries of Catholicism, animistic beliefs—which predated western colonization of the Asian archipelago that became the Philippines—have survived and were passed on across generations.

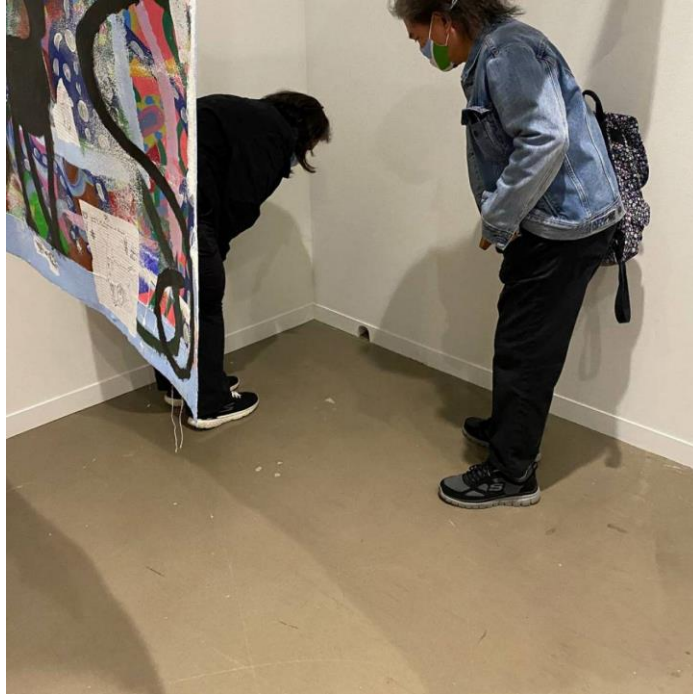
Before Spanish conquest and Christian conversion, natives believed, and many still do at present, that spirits dwell in creatures and natural features like trees, mountains, and rivers.

Animals were considered sacred, and so one shouldn't say bad things about them. Hence, this may explain the friendly allusion to rats as kind beings, lest they become angry and start destroying crops and household items.

As for the whole installation, Cruz said that visitors should expect to "get lost within the images".

“I guess the installation is disorienting. There’s so much to see. And a lot of the elements do echo with each other,” he said.

The exhibit is a maze of paintings that Cruz hung on a clothesline. Moreover, “It’s accompanied by this radio drama through a mouse hole.”



A mousehole in the exhibit delivers a radio drama.

So it’s back to the subject of mice, which ties in with the other elements of “si mabait at si malihim, mga agam agam sa kuro kuro”.

To explain, Filipinos of a certain age will remember the late Fidela Mendoza Magpayo, who was considered the queen of radio dramas in the Philippines.

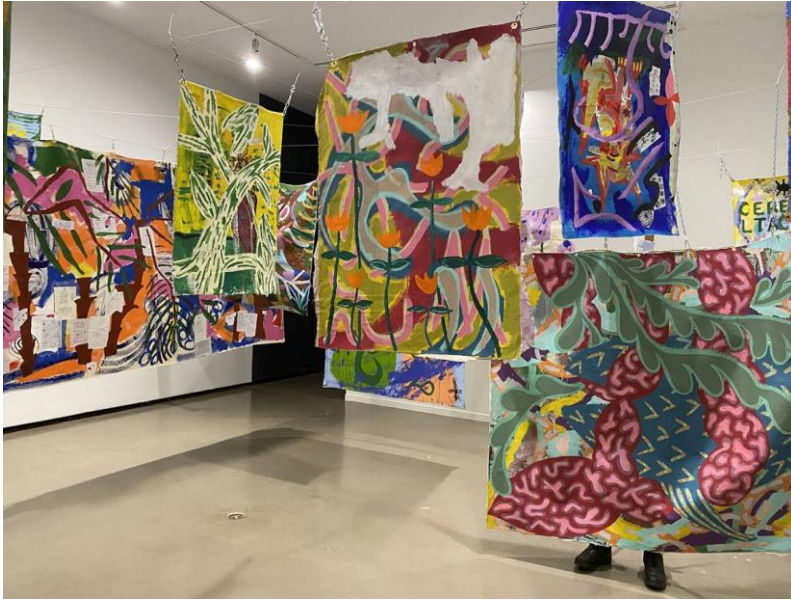
Popularly known as Tiya Dely (translation: Aunt Dely), Magpayo’s comforting voice would fill the airwaves, dispensing advice to those who wrote her, mostly regarding their problems about love, family, and relationships.

The “Tiya Dely” inspiration is behind the “agam agam sa kuro kuro” part of the title. This speaks to a person’s doubts about how to deal with a particular situation, and so the need to seek advice from someone.

For the fun part, mice hiding behind the walls probably listened to the same radio dramas. In homage to this, Cruz edited an audio piece from the show, which can be heard through the mouse hole of his installation.

As for *malihim*, or the “secretive being”, Cruz said that it is a reference to the sphinx, a mythical creature that symbolizes mystery or the unknown.

Because art is a language common to all cultures, Cruz noted that an English translation of his work is not really necessarily for viewers to gain something from it.



Cruz said that he uses Filipino titles for some of his works from time to time as a way for him to reconnect with his heritage.

“I learned much of my art through a western lens, through western histories, so I think doing things in Tagalog or thinking in ways through a Tagalog lens allows for an alternative perspective, a different vantage point,” he said.

Cruz was 18 when his whole family moved to Canada in 2005. He was then a fine-arts student at the University of the Philippines.

The second of three siblings finished his arts degree at Emily Carr University of Art + Design. He completed his master’s at the University of Guelph. He has taught in Canadian universities, and will work as an instructor at Emily Carr starting this September.

Cruz travels to the Philippines to host the Kamias Triennial, which has grown to become an international event featuring Canadian, international, and local Filipino artists.

Cruz started the exhibit, which runs every three years, in 2014 in the neighbourhood of Kamias, a district in Quezon City in Metro Manila.

He grew up in Kamias, which was named after a citrus fruit that is used to make sour soup, or *sinigang*.

Cruz was in the Philippines for the third Kamias Triennial around the time when the COVID-19 lockdowns started in early 2020.

“As an expatriate from the Philippines, you slowly disconnect with your culture,” Cruz noted. “You become Canadianized...I think, for me, it’s still important to go back to the roots.”

ALIMENTARY

Obrera Centro, Mexico City, June 9 to 16, 2019
by Zoë Heyn-Jones



Patrick Cruz's *Kitchen Codex* as part of "ALIMENTARY," Obrera Centro, Mexico City, 2019. Photo: Su-Ying Lee.

Seeing, smelling—or even imagining—food causes the brain to react subconsciously, increasing the secretion of saliva. This literal “mouth-watering” facilitates the teeth’s chewing function, and the saliva’s amylase enzyme begins breaking down food before it enters the stomach and intestines. The nerves that control this process are part of an intricate reflex system.

Entangled biological and cultural systems, and the reflexes that serve to nourish us, are central to the “ALIMENTARY” project, curated by Su-Ying Lee. In the kitchen at Obrera Centro in Mexico City, three events led by artists Patrick Cruz, Tsēmā Igharas and Amy Wing-Hann Wong brought us together over (yes) mouthwatering food and tea to find sustenance in the transmission of cultural knowledge that simmers and steeps in the body.

Beginning the week with *Sei Mei Tong*, Amy Wing-Hann Wong led us through the preparation of her mother’s healing and fortifying broth. As pork neck simmered on the stove, Wong led us through a recipe that involved assemblages of dried fruits, seeds and roots laid out at each place on a communal table. She described the process of translating each ingredient into phonetic Cantonese, then into English and Spanish, and searching for them in Mexico. The transposition of the recipe from her mother’s traditional

context to art worlds in Canada and Mexico invoked how recipes are living documents: as material and maternal practices, they act as scores for performances that transmit cultural memory and care as they change and grow across time and space.

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Amy Wing-Hann Wong’s *Sei Mei Tong* as part of “ALIMENTARY,” Obrera Centro, Mexico City, 2019.
Photo: Su-Ying Lee.

The maternal imperative in Wong’s practice resonated with me, and drew me, my partner and our seven-week-old daughter to the project. Since becoming a mother, Wong has made questions of parenthood central to her work. Creating a space welcoming to little ones and valorizing the experience of postpartum—for instance, in discussing her grandmother’s version of *geung cho*, a postpartum meal—is

political. Motherhood, in particular, is so often positioned as antithetical to artistic production. By sharing *Sei Mei Tong* and introducing the painstaking and communal process of creating *geung cho*, Wong manifested a social space that nourishes these interconnected facets of life↔work.

Animated by Wong's intervention, I sat down with my mother-in-law and transcribed her recipe for what amounted to my own healing and rejuvenating postpartum meal: *sopa de hongos*, a Mexican mushroom soup with toasted corn, squash blossoms and *epazote*, seasoned with chipotle peppers. Armed with this recipe scrawled on a paper bread bag, my family and I arrived at the second event in the program, Patrick Cruz's ongoing project *Kitchen Codex*. In *Kitchen Codex*, [which Cruz has performed elsewhere](#), the artist prepares and serves a Filipino meal and invites the local community to eat—in exchange for a recipe in any language, to be compiled in a cookbook. Documenting the event in this way, Cruz creates a portrait of each community that convenes around the meal. In the context of Mexico City, this portrait looked like shared—and distinctly divergent—histories of colonization: the Philippines, Mexico and Canada as lands networked through tongues and guts.



Patrick Cruz's *Kitchen Codex* as part of "ALIMENTARY," Obrero Centro, Mexico City, 2019. Photo: Su-Ying Lee.



Patrick Cruz's *Kitchen Codex* as part of "ALIMENTARY," Obrero Centro, Mexico City, 2019. Photo: Su-Ying Lee.

Tsēmā Igharas's lecture-performance *Glass Rocks and Caribou Weeds*, the final event in the program, began with the artist crumbling caribou weeds into a teapot, covering them with boiling water and serving us the aromatic brew. Over tea, Igharas shared images of her various artist projects that explore the complexities of extraction and embodiment on Tahltan land. Igharas showed us photos of the caribou-weed harvest and the plants drying indoors after being foraged. She also recounted how her grandmother would compel members of her community *not* to share such images widely in order to keep the harvest secret and therefore safe from those who might be inclined to pillage. Igharas's closing of the

“ALIMENTARY” project thus reminded us that hospitality extended must always be respected—that sacred and ancestral knowledge, while it may be shared, must ultimately nourish sovereignty.

In my kitchen cupboard now, a month later, there is a small paper bag containing honey dates, Solomon’s seal root, dried lily bulb and apricot kernels: dried ingredients that form the base of Wong’s *Sei Mei Tong*, gifted by the artist to all in attendance. Like “ALIMENTARY,” this small gift contains within it the potential for joyous collisions of flavours and textures, waiting to be awakened and activated with boiling water, slow simmering and the addition of local meats and fruits. Each pot will taste different, each iteration shaping a new social space as we gather around to nourish ourselves, and each other.