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LEESE STREET STUDIO: PAG+MUL+MULA+AN



Named for the workspace of Filipino American artist, educator, and activist Carlos Villa (1936-2013), Leese Street Studio presents interdisciplinary work by artists of the Filipinx diaspora.

Rebecca Maria Goldschmidt

Pag+mul+mula+an (png.); 1) Disso a pakakitaan kadagiti mula; 2) Ambiente ti pannakasursuro; 3) Maysa nga espasio ti metaforiko a jardin a pakatagikuaan manen iti duogan nga adal ken pannakapasantak kadagiti baro a wagas ti panagammo; 4) Maysa a dap-ayan a nairamut kadagiti filosofia ken aramid dagiti Ilokano iti kontekto ti pagsasao ken kulturada iti uneg ken ruar ti Region iti Ilocos, iti Amianan a Filipinas, ken kadagiti komunidad nga Ilokano iti sibubukel a pagilian ken iti diaspora.

***Pag+mul+mula+an* (n.)**

1) Place of plants or place of planting; 2) A learning environment; 3) A metaphorical garden space where we reclaim ancestral knowledge and cultivate new ways of knowing; 4) A gathering space rooted in the philosophies and practices of the Ilokano people in the context of their language and culture within and outside the Ilocos Region, the Northern Philippines, and Ilokano communities throughout the country and in the diaspora.

As part of my MFA thesis exhibition, *Pag+mul+mula+an*, I created a learning environment, a metaphorical garden space for the reclamation of ancestral knowledge and the generation of new ways of knowing. The concept of a space in the round with floor seating, an open format with plants and traditional weavings was designed after interviewing students and professors of the Ilokano Language and Literature Program at UH Mānoa about what their ideal Ilokano classroom space would look like. Together we wove the large coconut leaf curtains that provided the backdrop for the events held in the space, which unfortunately were cut short by COVID in March 2020.

From March 8 to April 9, 2020, I programmed various events exploring plants and language to be held in the space. Workshops included Philippine Plant Medicine class with Manang Angela Angel; weekly Artist Relations featuring demos on working with Pacific plants by Nanea Lum (taro/kalo), Nikau Hindin (wauke/mulberry), and ManGo FreeMan (niog/coconut); a Film Screening of *Walang Rape sa Bontok* with Adrian Alarilla and Caroline Baicey; Cordillera Talkback: Sustainability for Whom?; Fighting for Land, Life, and Resources with Manang Grace Caligtan about her travels in the Cordillera; Marunggay Moves: Migratory Plant Tales, a storytelling workshop with Manang Nadezna Ortega; Guided Meditation and Cosmology Mapping with Sarita Doe and a Performative Lecture with champoy; as well as a special visit from Lumad Women from Sabokahan in collaboration with Liyang Network, an advocacy group for environmental and human-rights defenders.

The project received support from the SEED Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access and Success (IDEAS) Grant as well as funding from the Student Activity and Program Fee Board (SAPFB) to provide transportation for the women of Sabokahan to come to Hawaii.

On March 13, 2020 the University closed its doors indefinitely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to hold some of the workshops, including the first three Artist/Plant Relations gatherings and the film screening, and moved the Cosmology mapping and Plant Medicine workshops online. Unfortunately, the women of Sabokahan were unable to join us, and we canceled all subsequent programming.

The exhibition also included a hand-printed and hand-bound zine which featured writings from various community members, teachers, and friends accompanied by my photographs. Donations of twenty dollars for the zines were sent to Sabokahan to support their programming for Lumad women and children in Mindanao.

Looking back two years later, the project seems ambitious—the creation of the space, making of handmade pillows, seating, weavings, and photographic prints alone was a large task, even without the programming. More than anything, it was truly an exercise in community collaboration, bringing together different Pacific cultures, artists, and educators to share their knowledge within a gallery space with a reputation of Euro- and Japanese-centrism. I had asked multiple people in the department if they could recall another Filipino graduate student that had come out of our program, and no one could tell me for sure. So, in the best way I knew how, I tried to bring us all together to learn from each other and our plant relations in a comfortable, welcoming environment.



Installation view of *Pag+mul+mula+an* at University of Hawaii at UH Mānoa Art Gallery, March 2020.



Cushions sewn from vintage fabrics from Rebecca's grandmother's collection, found fabrics, and Ilokano inabel woven by weavers of the San Jose Multi-Purpose Cooperative in Sarrat, Ilocos Norte. Cushions stuffed with shredded paper scavenged from UH Human Resources office, Astronomy and Theater department offices through coordination with maintenance staff.



Installation view of large scale bamboo and marrungay (moringa) pod weaving; a yellow divider wall with archival photographs of classes of schoolchildren in American schools in the Philippines in the early 20th century.



Hand-bound zine with screen-printed cover featuring writings by various Ilokano and Filipino artists paired with Rebecca's photographs.



Post-screening discussion of *Walang Rape sa Bontok* in the *Pag+mul+mula+an* space picturing Grace Caligtan, Rebecca Maria Goldschmidt, Caroline Baicey, Adrian Alarilla & others.



Attendees of post-screening discussion of *Walang Rape sa Bontok* in the *Pag+mul+mula+an* space. Including Grace Caligtan, Rebecca Maria Goldschmidt, Caroline Baicey, Adrian Alarilla, Cody Anderson, ManGo FreeMan, Layla Kilolu, Victor Limon, Richard Balancio, & Skayú Louis.



Nikau Hindin sharing her process of beating kapa in the breezeway of the UH Art Building as part of *Pag+mul+mula+an* programming. Artists Nanea Lum, Kamehanaokalā, & Nālamakūikapō Ahsing sit to the right of Nikau, looking on with other students.



ManGo FreeMan sharing steps to preparing a coconut frond for a woven hat with Sylvia Flores, Jaimey Hamilton Faris, Jenna Macy & Kat Kazlauskas in the *Pag+mul+mula+an* space.



Nanea Lum sharing the anatomy of kalo/taro in the breezeway of the UH Art Building as part of *Pag+mul+mula+an* programming.