

Decolonial Dream | Nicolei Gupit



"Nonnostalgia" by Nicolei Gupit.



"Nonutopia" by Nicolei Gupit.



"A Stem to Mend", an installation by Nicolei Gupit.

Exhibition & Events

Nicolei Gupit

May 4 - June 30, 2022

Reception: Thursday, May 12, 2022 from 5 - 7 PM

This exhibition is generously sponsored by Becky Ten Brink.

Nicolei is the recipient of the Elizabeth Charles Award.

Elizabeth Charles believed in the arts as a vehicle for self-expression and as a means to develop a deeper understanding of our humanity. As a student, Elizabeth actively championed human equity and diversity. In 2020, the Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center and Elizabeth's father, Norm Charles, established the fund in her honor. Funding is provided by Norm Charles, Phyllis Mellon, as well as additional funders who seek to continue her championship by supporting Michigan artists and amplifying their voices through monetary awards and promotions. Preference will be given to artists with a vision for or emphasis on enhancing awareness and equity across race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or ethnicity.

Artist Bio

Born in 1990, Nicolei Buendia Gupit grew up in a predominately low-income, nonwhite neighborhood in Los Angeles where she and her family relied on child welfare, food stamps, and public transportation to get by. Through the bus window, she witnessed the severe racial and socioeconomic gaps between the people of L.A. These observations as a young bus rider led her to make drawings and paintings that feature the diverse bus-riding population as a visual means to communicate the city's vast disparities. Over the years, her practice has expanded to encompass installation, video, and sculpture to incorporate physical objects and materials—from metal, wood, and paper to textiles, palm fronds, and banana leaves—that are symbolically and conceptually resonant with concepts of cultural hybridity and social belonging. By juxtaposing, combining, and manipulating imagery and techniques, she develops an interdisciplinary practice that bridges the manufactured and the handcrafted, fictions and realities, and high and low technologies.

Gupit completed a BA in studio art at Williams College where she was the recipient of the prestigious Prize for Distinction in Art. After completing her degree, she taught English abroad in Micronesia, South Korea, and Taiwan from 2014 to 2019. Her recent projects have been exhibited at The Painting Center in New York City, NY; the Minneapolis Institute of Art in Minneapolis, MN; and the We Are South Music & Arts Festival in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. She lives and works in East Lansing, MI where she is currently pursuing her MFA in studio art at Michigan State University.

Artist Statement

Nicolei states:

"As a multidisciplinary artist born and raised in Los Angeles, I make paintings, sculptures, videos, and mixed-media installations that draw on two distinct but intimately tied cultures: Filipinx and American cultures. For example, I use plant matter found in the Philippines such as palm fronds, banana leaves, bamboo, cogon grass, gampi, abaca, and rice as unconventional materials to create my art. I also incorporate lottery scratchers in my work to speak on the pursuit of the American dream and financial hardship in the US. By layering different elements from American and Filipinx cultures together, my body of work expresses the cultural hybridity that reflects my identity and my experience as a second-generation immigrant. As a whole, I take inspiration from my Filipinx family heritage and upbringing in Los Angeles to speak on the challenges that many members of immigrant and diasporic communities face.

I selected the name, *Decolonial Dream*, to serve as a counterpoint to the American dream. While the American dream purports to offer social mobility and access to wealth to all American people and often falls short of its promises, *Decolonial Dream* suggests an imagined future in which all people enjoy environmental justice, financial stability, and peace regardless of their race, gender, class, or citizenship status. As described by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, a theorist of race and ethnicity, in his text "On the Coloniality of Being," decolonization refers to an orientation towards human generosity and openness. This relates to the fact that many of my works were informed by self-guided research on US colonization in the Philippines at the turn of the 20th century. As such, the works to be featured in the show will be selected based on the theme of "decolonizing."

I am thrilled to bring *Decolonial Dream* to fruition at the Lansing Art Gallery & Education Center. By exploring themes of migration, culture, memory, and global relations, my practice aims to bring hope and better futures to all immigrant and diasporic communities around the globe."