

ENVIRONMENT X ART

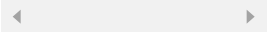
Imprinted in the Water

A reflection by Filipina artist Nicolei Gupit on Mankind's utter misuse of one of the most vital sources of life



Jodie Jose · [Follow](#)

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Plastic cloaks pulsate with the undertow of the river, hinting at the death toll our society has decided for itself, and all of life. Garbage-filled waters are a common sight, and banning the use of convenience store bottles have become unimaginable. How terrifying it is that we are no longer alarmed to the juncture of action to find entangled fins and displaced communities. How far has mankind gone in its low regard for life?



Inspired by her surroundings in Los Baños, Laguna, Gupit presented to us in her third solo show last May, *Imprinted in the Water*, a range of mediums and processes that highlight the impact of artificial activities on water resources. By using prints of man-made objects, she highlighted the ways by which we have come to rely on the life-giving element of springs, rivers, and oceans for our own needs, often at the expense of the environment and other human and non-human life. The wet pigment she wielded to dye her surfaces suggests the fluidity and mutability of water, and the need for us to consider our effect on this vital resource. Its subdued palette emanated an ominous atmosphere that conveys the gloomy reality we face. Connecting this with images of marine life skeletons, she concocted impressions of the devastating ramifications of pollution and overfishing on aquatic ecosystems. Uprooted trees signify the destruction of natural habitats, while flaky tin roofs allude to the consequences of climate change and natural disasters in the lives of marginalized Filipinos yearly. Gupit also incorporated bottle-shaped resin works that carry paper money inside — probing pieces that challenged viewers to consider the value we place on water and its privatization leading to create a sort of exclusivity around potable water.

Through her pieces, Gupit challenged viewers to consider their own relationship with water, and the far-reaching consequences our actions implicate on the entire ecology where we have single-handedly twisted to serve our whims and desires. Water is a significant and prevailing theme in her body of works even beyond this exhibition. Through her practice, Gupit invites us to reflect on the imprint we leave on the natural world, and to consider how we might work to create a more sustainable and equitable future for all.



***Nicolei Buendia Gupit** (b. 1990, Los Angeles) is a contemporary Filipina American artist working across installation, sculpture, painting, and video to probe questions on cultural belonging. Her multidisciplinary practice speculates on diasporic futures and entangles the relationship between ecologies, foods, histories, and cultures.*

To learn more about the artist and her works, you may visit her website, <https://www.nicoleigupit.com/>

All photos in this article was provided by the artist

The above article was first published as the show's exhibit text. Minor revisions were made for its publishing here.

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