

09/11/2023–14/12/2023

Migrant Belonging(s)

nicolei gupit

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Curated by spazioSERRA

Critical text by Lily Woodruff

On display from 09/11/2023 to 14/12/2023

Opening Thursday 09/11/2023 at 19:00

Lancetti railway station, Milan

Nicolei Buendia Gupit (Los Angeles, USA, 1990) 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, histories, and cultures. Gupit has exhibited her work globally at various art venues including Art Fair Philippines in Metro Manila, Philippines; Axis Gallery in Sacramento, CA; ARC Gallery in Chicago, IL; and the Painting Center in New York City, NY. She obtained her BA in Studio Art from Williams College in 2013 and her MFA in Studio Art from Michigan State University in 2022.

Migrant Belonging(s)

Migrant Belonging(s) is the site-specific exhibition by Nicolei Buendia Gupit presented as part of unpostolMPOSSIBILE, spazioSERRA's exhibition season in which the selected artists abstract their artistic experience from a physical space to an unplaceable "elsewhere" through a continuous dialogue between internal/interior and external/exterior. The exhibition is on display from Thursday, November 9, to Thursday, December 14, 2023, at the Lancetti railway station in Milan.

Nicolei Buendia Gupit is a contemporary Filipina American artist working across installation, sculpture, painting, and video to investigate themes of cultural belonging. Her multidisciplinary practice speculates on diasporic futures that unite populations worldwide, intertwining relationships and gastronomy, stories and cultures, in search of a shared sense of belonging.

Gupit's solo exhibition *Migrant Belonging(s)* imagines a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic gathering site where people from different backgrounds share their stories of migration and diaspora. Her project results from interviews she conducted with migrants and second-generation citizens

Critique in France, 1958-1981 was published by Duke University Press in 2020. Her articles, reviews, and translations have appeared in *Art Journal*, *Nonsite.org*, *caa.reviews*, *ASAP Journal*, *Tacet Experimental Music Review*, *Asymmetry Music Magazine*, and *France and the Visual Arts since 1945: Remapping European Postwar and Contemporary Art*.

READ THE CRITICAL TEXT

wallets, and documents—objects essential to emigrating to a new country in addition to those that recall home, as described by her interviewees. These cast objects, gathered on a large bamboo-covered surface, shed light on the efforts made by diasporic peoples to survive and thrive in our contemporary globalized world. Lily Woodruff writes in the critical text: “One of the things that Gupit repeatedly heard in interviewing her subjects is that their belongings took on new meaning in the contexts of their new realities. For this reason, Gupit has come to describe those objects in their new cultural contexts as “bad copies” of themselves. The paperclay replicas that she sculpts create this effect of disfunction”.

Stories of exile also take shape in handwritten phrases impressed on the windows of spazioSERRA, recounting the testimonials and family histories of the protagonists.

Many passersby at Lancetti station are likely to relate to the stories of sacrifice, hopes, and desires for a better future expressed in Gupit’s objects of migration. The work highlights how protagonists of diaspora have redefined what it means to belong to a place and to a community, making belonging more fluid but at the same time more familiar and universal. spazioSERRA becomes the impossible place where protagonists of diaspora—from different backgrounds and mother tongues who share the same experience of non-belonging—can meet and reunite. “While the objects that Gupit replicates index the specific experiences of individuals, one of the things that is remarkable about them is that, in their everydayness, they resemble the types of things that might belong to nearly anyone residing in our globalized world. The work presents an impression of continuity more than of difference. The objects don’t signify origins as much as mobility”.

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