



MADAME A AND THE HUNGRY BEAR Diorama, 152.25 x 86 x 96.3 cm., 2012



FALLEN ANGEL Diorama, 152.5 x 73.2 x 93.6 cm., 2012

other propositions in the suite on the elevator girls of Japan, uniformed and catatonic, and on grandmothers spinning their fantasies through costume and performance. In these endeavors, certain crucial elements congeal: the collected narrative, the capture of the plot, and the vehicle of telling. Critical here in relation to Javier's own preoccupations is the form of a childlike-adultbound fantasy. In the said exhibition, Wanagi recreates the fairy tales with a heady mixture of the gothic and the grotesque, comprising prosthesis and live people in the task of reenactment. What might have prefigured this inclination in Javier was her little-known work involving embroidery embedded in wax. This interaction between different substances – paint, textile, paraffin – skillfully entangled in story, embodied in doll, unravels as a yarn, a stitching of time and in time, that is the immanent critique of myth.

In many ways, the curator-artist-collector restages phases of the impossible flux of life in the exhibition. In both Javier and Yanagi, the form of the frieze is salient. Figures and circumstances therein appear petrified like specimens of the past or a theater of memory. But specimens and theaters always threaten to animate, to stir up the conceit of the present, the so-called ethnographic present and its reality-effect. This seems to be the quest of Javier's curiosities: to inhabit the "dreamhouses of the collective" and live them out or outlive them. And her range of options for facture, for dreaming houses, is quite ample: wrapping, twining, printmaking, vitrine making, painting, writing, filming, framing, hanging, fitting miniatures in cabinets, image transferring, tating lace, piling up leaves, embroidering, alluding to taxidermy, adorning dead birds. There is a high level of the ornament in this labor as well as the melodrama of remembrance, aesthetic tendencies that adumbrate the Philippine.



THE CAT FAIRY Diorama, 152.5 x 73.2 x 93.6 cm., 2012

In this spirit or refigurations, another anecdote might be in order. In a gesture of reciprocation, the writer Robert Coover, fabulist and metafictionist, responds to Joseph Cornell in the anthology of other responses to the oeuvre of the exemplary American assemblagist fittingly called *A Convergence of Birds*. Coover's fictive para-site is the grand hotel. In this passage, he limns the phantasmagoria of a transient room, yet another incident and locus of the dreamhouse of the collective:

No, the true dangers of the Grand Hotel Nymphlight lie more in the intrusion upon one's own childhood without the grace of childhood ignorance, for it is not always a good thing (how often we tell children this!) to obtain what one most desires. One may have prepared oneself before checking in for the possible unearthing of forgotten fears and anxieties, not least those of the playground, and one might even have foreseen that some of the most joyous moments in the hotel would, at the same time, knowing what one knows, be profoundly melancholic, augmenting rather than relieving one's sense of loss (some little guests, playing their hearts out, weep the while, as children often do), but one cannot anticipate the panic that can seize a guest who suddenly, too late, repents of his or her decision. Sometimes this happens already in the bath, but, even though this may give rise to a great thrashing about, there is no undoing what has begun until its full course has been run. Others, momentarily entranced by the seductive pleasures of the bath, are struck by terror only upon entering into the company of other children, and terrified not by the others but by their own strange, confused, and diminished selves, by their appalling and ruthless innocence, discovering in that instant that, while losing one's childhood can be a sad thing, losing one's adulthood, even for a day (if it's only a day! what is happening? I can't remember!), can be catastrophic. ©



Exhibit Installation: VARGAS EXPOSED Installation, variable dimensions, 2013



VARGAS EXPOSED (detail)



THE HIDDEN VARGAS (detail)



Exhibit Installation: THE HIDDEN VARGAS Installation, variable dimensions, 2013 (put line divider here)
Foreground: MEMOIRS OF MADAME A. (detail)



Exhibit Installation: MADAME A. Film, digital, color, English and Filipino with English subtitles, 27 mins., 2011
VARGAS COLLECTION, Left: FERNANDO AMORSOLO, MUCHO, Oil on hardboard, 37.3 x 29.5 cm., 1948; Right: JOSE PEREIRA, LA MORENA, Oil on plywood, 38.5 x 29.3 cm., 1946



[COVER ARTWORK] THE CAT FAIRY (detail) Diorama, 2012

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GERALDINE JAVIER Curiosities

13 FEBRUARY – 20 APRIL 2013

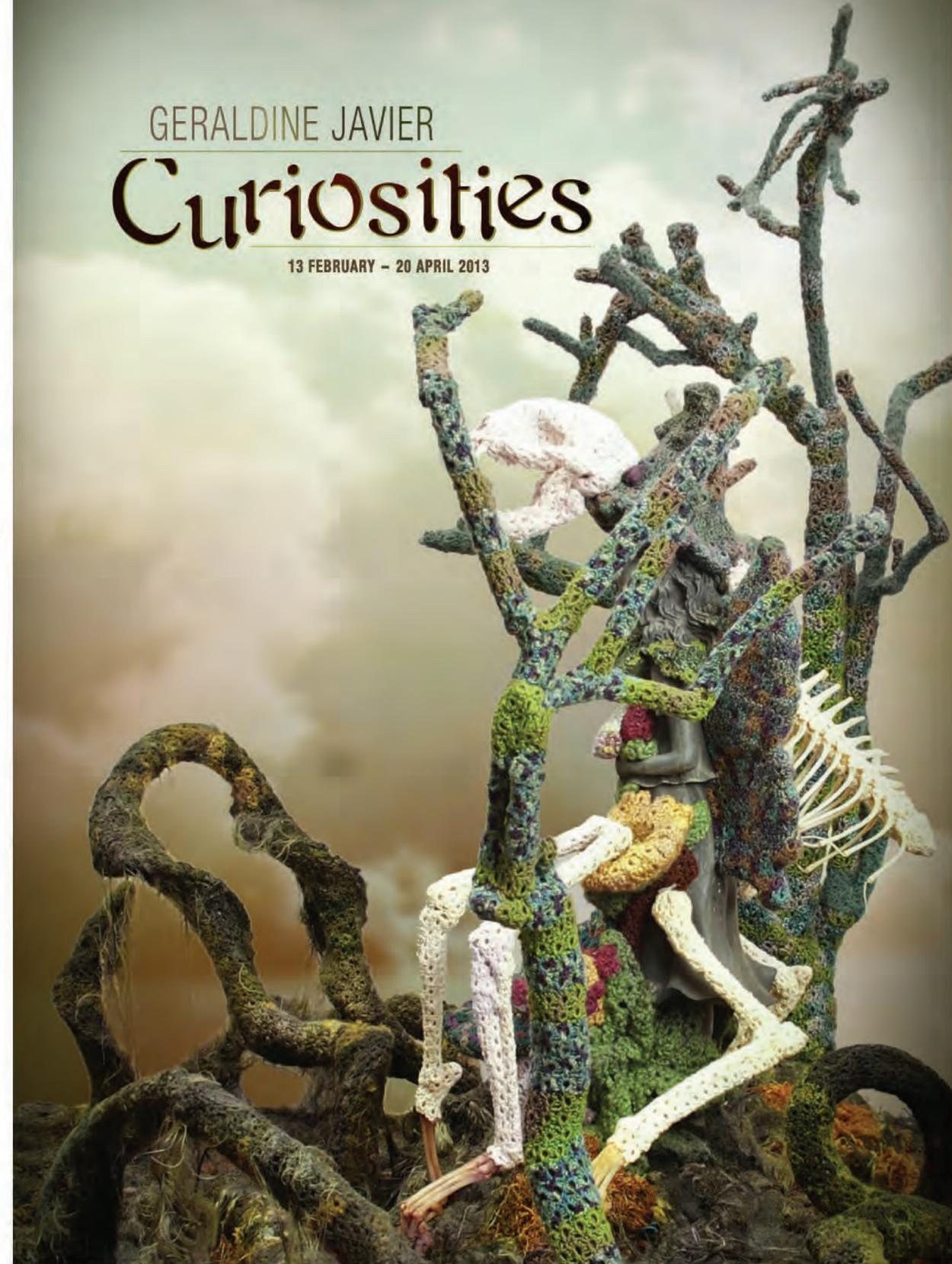




Exhibit Installation, Left: **THINKING OF AUTUMN** Intermedia (hammered leaves on canvas, dried twigs wrapped in tating, and preserved bird) 60.96 x 76.2 x 13 cm. 2013 | Right: **SING ME A SONG** Installation (pastel, hammered leaves, and beeswax on dividers, skeleton, dried plants, and tating lace), variable dimensions, 2011



Exhibit Installation: **CABINET OF CURIOSITIES** Installation (pastel, hammered leaves, and beeswax on canvas, vitrines, and objects), 186.5 x 65 x 35.5 cm. (each cabinet), 2011

Dreamhouse

PATRICK D. FLORES

It was the German philosopher Walter Benjamin who remarked that museums "unquestionably belong to the dreamhouses of the collective." The contemporary artist Geraldine Javier presents her works on aspects of this collective in a museum of art and wartime memorabilia in Manila. She pursues her project of making objects, weaving story, and putting them in place or on view within a structure that is verisimilarly shaped by the same habits of keeping and laying bare. Benjamin's notion of the dreamhouse is intriguing, partly because it alludes to the mingling of science and personal taste, of method and idiosyncrasy in the formation of a public museum that was once a house of collected belongings; it was fondly called *Kawilihan*, roughly translated as Leisure or Fascination. Underlying this enterprise is a temper that surveils and covets the myriad things in the world and at the same time discriminates them by carving out distinctions across everything from everywhere. Students of the history of art history and the museum describe this contradiction or "irresolution" as productively modernist, and therefore open to the deconstruction of the contemporary.

Javier in recent time has been well spoken for her paintings. These are paintings that partly intend to be photographic, or offer a semblance of it. That said, the realistic surface or



FOURTH BURIAL (detail)



PELVISSOMNIUMPAPILIO 1.3 (detail)



CABINET OF CURIOSITIES (detail)



Exhibit Installation: **CESSATION OF BIRDS' SONG (ECLIPSE)** Intermedia (embroidery, collage, and frames), variable dimensions, 25 pieces, 2011



Exhibit Installation, Left: **VERTEBRAESOMNIUMANISOPTERA E**, Intermedia (Lithography, screen print, acrylic coated leaves on kozo paper) 97 x 65 cm. 2012; Right: **UNTITLED** Installation (drift wood wrapped in tating lace), variable dimensions, 2013



UNTITLED (details)

appearance is disrupted, supplemented as it is by another source of wonder: the realia of fabricated and found objects. It is in this mingling of dispositions where an aesthetic condenses. It is keen on the process of capture: the production of image and the appropriation of object as a mode of possession. In this uncanny instance, memory and property permeate the art.

These devices of possession further lead Javier to the procedures of, to tweak the word of Benjamin, "dreamhousing." Her initiations play out in the intimacy afforded by dream and dwelling, in miniature abodes of persons and things, in cabinets and figurines. These finally become her "curiosities," a category of objects that implicitly recalls the "exotic." The exotic either reduces reality to type or owns up to its incomprehension altogether. Between typification and untranslatability is a prospective space. It is a scenography of a collection that is ex-posed and ex-cited, fair game to inquiry, interpretation, intelligence.

The artist thus assumes a curatorial function. In her custody are both matter and spirit. She is a curate first and foremost, responsible for conversion and salvation. Then she is curator in an institution, wielding power to amass, name, and compare. This exhibition is her parish and museum -- her congregation. In minding and looking after her domain, she is prone to scaling, intuiting proximities and distances. And she invites encounters. Curiosity is, after all, contact. It is encounter, interest. The event of seeing is again a moment of capture, and surely, of captivation. There is necessary violence, even barbarism to channel Benjamin again, in the documentation of "culture," which is at the outset impure, in fact a corruption. But in the hands of Javier, this irreducible hybridity, like a beautiful orchid flourishing in the tropics, is strangely beautiful as has been portrayed by an attentive observer, an interval of a possible disfiguration and potential restoration.



Exhibit Installation: **MEMOIRS OF MADAME A**. Intermedia (bound collage with preserved leaves and beeswax), approx. 16 x 14 x 4 cm. each, 20 pieces, 2002-2011
CATCH PROBE LIFE DEATH Intermedia, variable dimensions, 3 pieces, 2011



MEMOIRS OF MADAME A. (detail)



MEMOIRS OF MADAME A. (detail)



CATCH PROBE LIFE DEATH (detail)

In this project for the Vargas Museum, the mediation of the object of history gains more layers of complication because of the history of the collector Jorge Vargas who had endowed this museum with his trove of art, stamps, coins, personal effects, photographs, manuscripts, and so on. A conflicted figure within the successive imperialisms of America and Japan, he accumulated this material at the height of the war and aspired to the reconstruction of colony/country via the coherence of the history and collection of art as an allegory of sorts of an independent republic rising from the ruins.

Javier converses with this story. In fact, she is invested in the ideology of story making in the main. In itself, this undertaking at the Vargas is a compendium, an anthology of traveling investigations that is recouped here for another sortie into reconsideration. Here we find a scene of copious objects but mediated in discrepant vectors of representation. There is the fiction of species rendered in graphic technology. There are dioramas of mythologies conceived broadly. There is a film in which a fugue of voices resonates; speaking are a young girl, an old woman, a curator. Taken together, these fragments of revelation form an enigmatic tableau, the imaginarium of which is eerily static and yet densely morphing into anatomies and carapaces of "natural history."

Looking at this synthesis, we might be reminded of the work of the Japanese artist Miwa Yanagi. In 2005, she held an exhibition at the enchanting Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, a house museum that is hospitable to homeliness or even the unhomely of the contemporary. It was titled *The Incredible Tale of the Innocent Old Lady and the Heartless Young Girl*. This formed part of the *Fairy Tale* series of photography and video installations on retold tales of young girls and old women culled from the Brothers Grimm, Andersen, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *Eréndira*. Yanagi's whimsy of young girls in an atmosphere of terror, seduction, and alienation relate with her