

WAWI NAVARROZA



MEDUSA

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WAWI NAVARROZA
MEDUSA

6 MAY - 3 JUNE 2017

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The Island, 2017
archival pigment ink print on Hahnemühle fine
art paper mounted on aluminum
30 x 45 in
(76.2 x 114.3 cm)
Edition of 5 + 2 AP

INTRODUCTION

An obsessive curiosity with medium and material, often extracted from a philosophical preoccupation with portraiture, land and landscape drive the work of Wawi Navarroza. Constantly shifting her interests between the minute and the monumental, she presents various dualities in her photo and installation based works to understand both her own, and humanity's relationship to place and time. Frequently referencing the discourse of photography in relation to the gaze and debates between expression and documentation, she also aims to open up new ways of thinking about her chosen medium.

Such a range of interests serves to create purposeful tensions between her various poetics and intellectual inquiries. Medusa continues these trajectories as most recently seen in her previous solo exhibitions *Tierra Salvaje* (2014) and *ULTRA-MAR, PART II: Hunt & Gather, Terraria* (2013) but instead of dirt drawings and plant filled terrariums she looks to stone, and in particular marble, to discuss ideas of landscape, myth and material via the island of Romblon in the Philippines.

THE MEDUSA GAZE

Being a natural seeker/traveller who is influenced by the works of American scholar Joseph Campbell on myth and the hero's journey; the Medusa legend, of the snake haired Gorgon whose monstrous gaze turned her victims into stone, was a seductive thread to conceptually weave through the exhibition. She has been depicted throughout art history as the beast vanquished by the hero Perseus who cuts off her head, using his reflective shield to avert her petrifying stare. However, here, Medusa's presence is felt by her striking absence. It is her gaze, defeated by the use of a mirror, which haunts the exhibition instead.

This leads to various questions about photography itself, such as whose perspective are we viewing the works from and who is looking at who: the artist, the camera, the subject, or the viewer? What is fact and fiction amongst this constellation of detached images, expressive 'paintings' and curious installation? This intrinsic doubleness forms the bedrock of the show and aims to open up a multitude of readings around medium, narrative building and philosophy. As for Medusa, her memory is in the stone itself, becoming both material and muse for Navarroza's research.



Monolith, Sibuyan Sea, 2017
archival pigment ink print on Hahnemühle fine
art paper mounted on aluminum
30 x 45 in
(76.2 x 114.3 cm)
Edition of 5 + 2 AP

MARBLE: FROM LAND TO SCULPTURE TO DUST

Marble is a metamorphic rock commonly used in sculpture and building. Art historically this dates back to ancient Greece and Rome where representations of gods, goddesses and exceptional men and women were carved for the elite and middle class. Marble is therefore a symbol of time and timelessness, a host for old stories that immortalize the powerful and important. However, its origins are far more profound, because marble comes from the land, as part of the mountains that have been silently shaping themselves for eternity. It is this cycle that the artist is drawn to, the shifting states from land to material and finally, to dust. The macro to the micro, the grand to the ephemeral. Throughout Medusa we see this unfold whether through images of natural marble deposits, classical mise en scene of men at work, to the final objects they have been producing.

However although the dominant image is of labor, masculinity and hard stone, ideas of lightness and immateriality are just as important to consider. The symbolic use of dust in Medusa originates from a personal experience of material ruin, which required stoic reflection on the part of Navarroza. Rising from the ashes of this loss, the dust that we see filling the space and settling on the skin of the workers in The Ballad of the Marble Men, or in her monumental dust painting Collecting Dust represent the passing of time, and the ability of marble to be broken down into delicate particles through the process of creation and renewal, like life itself



Sentinels (turn to stone), 2017
archival pigment ink print on Hahnemühle fine
art paper mounted on aluminum
40 x 60 in
(1016 x 152.4 cm)
Edition of 5 + 2 AP



Confabulation, 2017
archival pigment ink print on Hahnemühle fine
art paper mounted on aluminum 40 x 60 in
(101.6 x 152.4 cm)
Edition of 5 + 2 AP

ROMBLON AND A TROPICAL REIMAGINING

However, although the dominant narrative of marble is based in the West, it is found all over the world, and has been used extensively in Asia. So Navarroza purposefully locates her subject matter in the Philippines through a contemporary tropical gaze (artist, subject, audience) to reimagine the geographies of art history and myth. Our hero Perseus can now be found working in a marble workshop, confidently gazing out at the viewer in a large-scale portrait. Rather than Greece, he is born and raised in Romblon the capital of the Philippine marble industry, where Navarroza travelled back and forth for two years to research the extraction of marble for manufacture and observe those who live and work in the trade.

This is also why she includes the installation *A Feast in the Forest* made up of an actual marble table filled with the wares of Romblon, a mythical meal purposefully made in the Philippines by the hands of local men. However despite this tropical lens, *Medusa* is not a documentary of place but a carefully staged reimagining of landscape that shifts in between the real and abstract.

THE EXHIBITION, FROM REALITY TO ABSTRACTION

The exhibition experience of Medusa is a visual journey. Viewers arrive in the entrance room of Silverlens and immediately see two images: Island, a coastal image of Romblon and Monolith Sibuyan Sea, that shows a block of marble protruding from the land overlooking the ocean. Although these visual locating devices anchor the show in a specific place, the main gallery space opens up into an almost timeless, universal pondering of landscape, myth and material across scale and medium. Likened to a ship arriving in a bay of images and ideas, Navarroza's photographs, 'paintings' and marble installation have all been thoughtfully placed in conversation with one another to challenge fixed assumptions about medium and subject. This is why she purposefully uses abstraction in the form of installation and two-dimensional 'paintings' or 'drawings' to interrupt the representational nature of her photography. The hard edges and formal geometries of men and marble seen in *The Ballad of the Marble Men (the dust that won't settle)* and *Geograph 1 and II* are challenged by her monumental durational dust paintings *Collecting Dust A and B* where two primed canvases were left in a marble workshop for four to five months to randomly collect dust emitted during the labor process. With varying surface thickness, the final, incredibly heavy pieces appears almost celestial due to the random rhythms of settling particles. In *12 Heads* she actually intervenes in the works' production, manipulating smaller canvases in front of the circular saw that cuts the marble to direct and attract yet more layers of dust.

These collected specks and splatters of white marble against a black background invoke an almost cosmic heartbeat as a record of planetary time. Such expressive 'paintings' contrast with the cool clarity of her photographs. As such the visual and conceptual vertigo of different scales, mediums and meanings, leads the viewer through a maze of possible interpretations that eventually enters the realm of the metaphysical. By allowing these marble slabs to literally become a tabula rasa (there is even a work of the same name), we enter into a vision of epic proportions. It is a blank slate to observe and write the future of these uncertain times through the cycle of renewal from mountain to man to machine to dust. These are some of the findings of Wawi Navarroza's never ending quest to explore and discover the world around her. The philosopher's stone that anchors her in time and place. Medusa is therefore yet another tribute to the artist's beloved 'ultramar' seen throughout her practice in various guises. Of how looking at something from an alternative vantage point, through the process of displacement, movement and travel can achieve a clarity of mind in order to, as Campbell famously advised, follow your bliss and reach one's true potential.

By Eva McGovern



The Ballad of the Marble Men (the dust that won't settle), 2017
archival pigment ink print on Hahnemühle fine
art paper mounted on aluminum
30 x 45 in
(76.2 x 114.3 cm)
Edition of 5 + 2 AP



Geograph I, 2017
archival pigment ink print on Hahnemühle fine
art paper mounted on aluminum
45 x 30 in
(114.3 x 76.2 cm)
Edition of 5 + 2 AP



Geograph II, 2017
archival pigment ink print on Hahnemühle fine
art paper mounted on aluminum
45 x 30 in
(114.3 x 76.2 cm)
Edition of 5 + 2 AP



image by Jessica de Leon (SILVERLENS)



***Tabula Rasa*, 2017**

archival pigment ink print on Hahnemühle fine
art paper mounted on aluminum

72 x 48 in
(182.88 x 121.92 cm)

Edition of 5 + 2 AP

Perseus (portrait of a young marble worker), 2017
archival pigment ink print on Hahnemühle fine
art paper mounted on aluminum
60 x 48 in
(152.4 x 121.92 cm)
Edition of 5 + 2 AP





image by Jessica de Leon (SILVERLENS)

Collecting Dust A, 2017
acrylic, oil, marble dust on canvas; durational painting,
4-5 months accumulation
72 x 96 in
(182.88 x 243.84 cm)

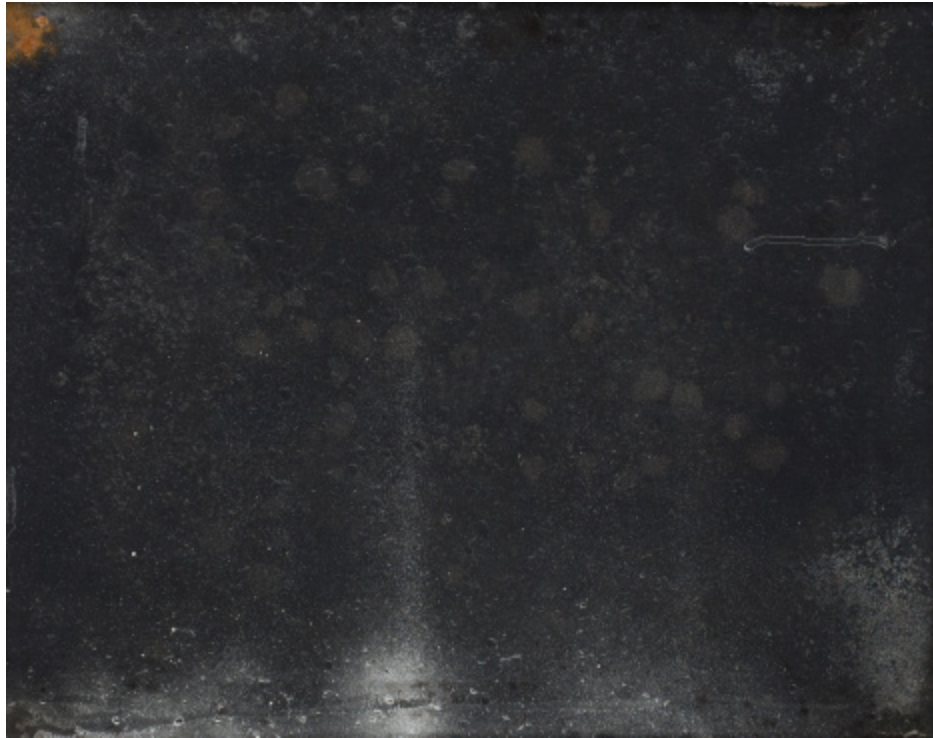




Collecting Dust B, 2017

acrylic, oil, marble dust on canvas; durational painting,
4-5 months accumulation

72 x 96 in
(182.88 x 243.84 cm)



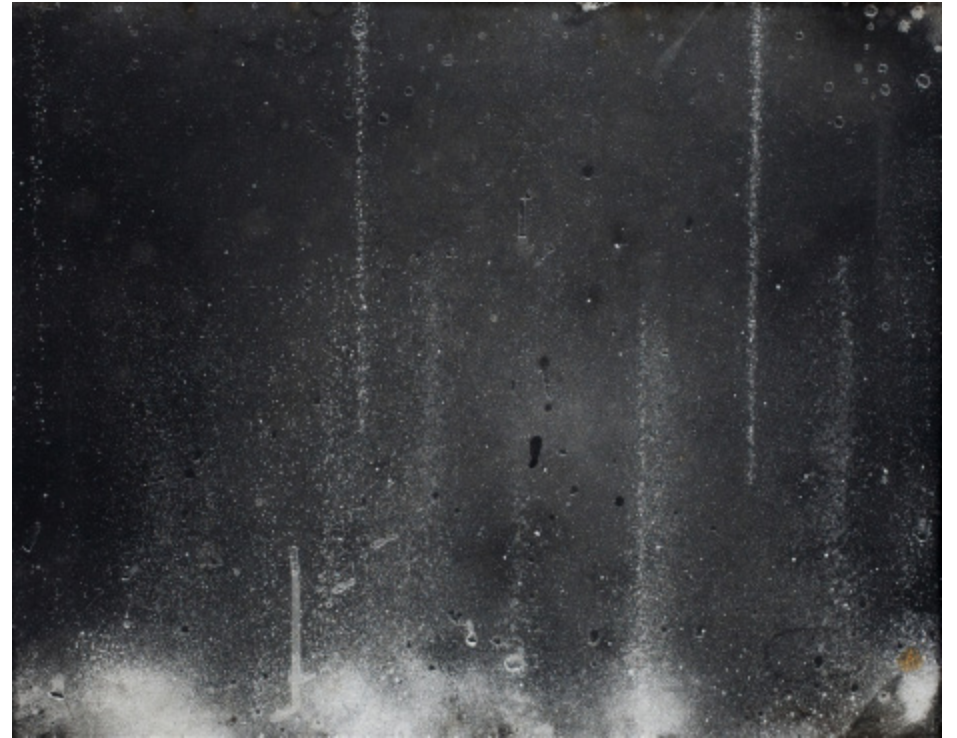
Twelve Heads, n°1, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



Twelve Heads, n°2, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



Twelve Heads, n°3, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



Twelve Heads, n°4, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



Twelve Heads, n°5, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



Twelve Heads, n°6, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



Exhibition walk-through with Wawi Navarroza
image by Jessica de Leon (SILVERLENS)



Twelve Heads, n°7, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



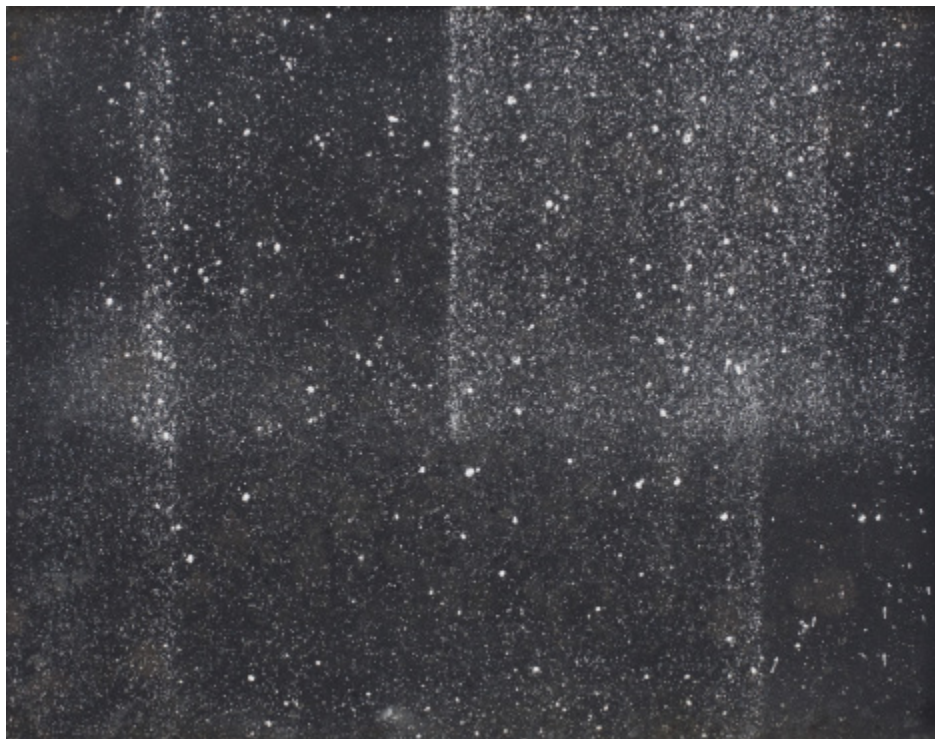
Twelve Heads, n°8, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



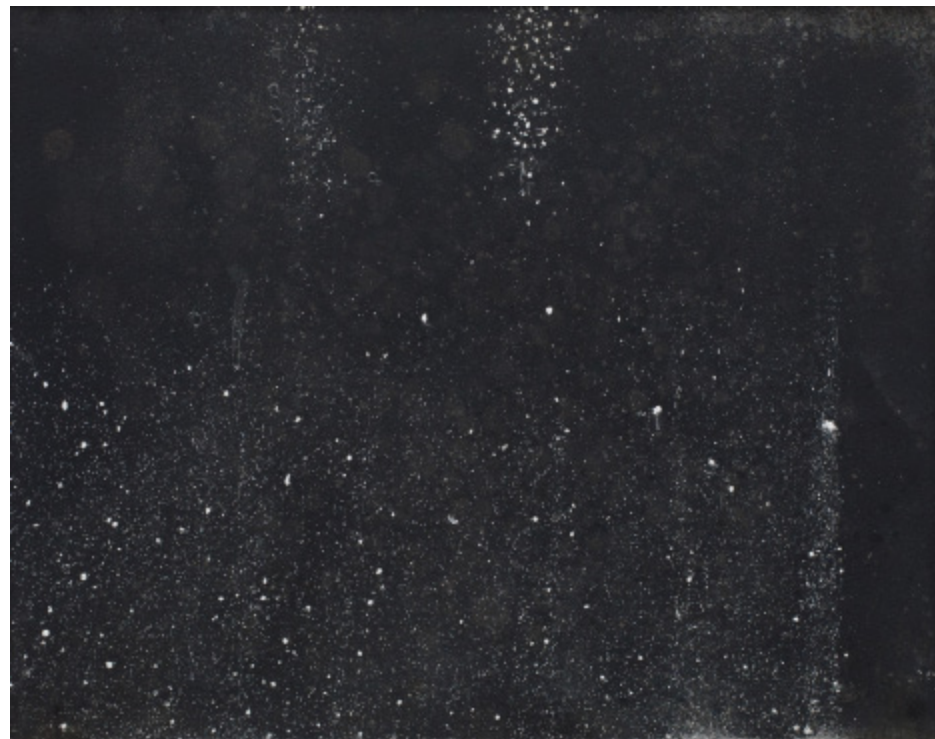
Twelve Heads, n°9, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



Twelve Heads, n°10, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



Twelve Heads, n°11, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



Twelve Heads, n°12, 2017
acrylic and marble dust on canvas
16 x 20 in
(4064 x 508 cm)



A Feast in the Forest, 2017

1 solid marble tabletop with carved snake stand (100cm x 250cm), 10 solid marble stools, 10 plates, 10 goblets, 10 coffee cups and saucers, 1 vase with flowers, 1 3-tier server, 2 candelabras, 2 pitchers, 6 softdrinks, 2 Sioktong bottles, 3 ash trays, 5 atis fruit, 5 bananas, 12 boknoy (siopao)
dimension variable
Edition 1 of 1

WAWI NAVARROZA

Wawi Navarroza (b. 1979, Manila) is a multi-disciplinary artist/photographer from Manila, Philippines. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from De La Salle University, Manila and attended continuing education at the International Center of Photography, New York. In 2012, Navarroza completed her scholarship with an award from the Istituto Europeo di Design, Madrid under the program European Master of Fine Art Photography.

Navarroza's approach to photography is malleable, less and less as a documentarian but rather as an author of a visual language she creates and assembles in pictures. Her body of work is expressed in a combination of tableaux, portraiture, still life and installation through a process informed by research and also largely by referential use of materials. In recent years, Navarroza has followed a cycle focused on depicting notions of looking at contemporary landscape seen from an experiential self-reflexive point of view. Her works investigate displacements, disorientation, discovery and the idea of shifting locations as response to the surrounding environment.

Navarroza has widely exhibited in the Philippines and internationally. Recent solo exhibits include: "Tierra Salvaje" (2014), "Hunt & Gather, Terraria" (2013) "ULTRAMAR, Pt.1: Gathered Throng, Falling Into Place" (2012), "Dominion" (2011), at Silverlens Gallery, Manila and "On Landscapes and Some Dislocations" (2012) at Galeria Patrick Domken, Cadaqués, Spain. She has participated regionally at the Tokyo Month of Photography presented by Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography (2012), the Asian Art Biennale in Taichung, Taiwan (2011), the annual touring exhibition "CUT: New Photography from South East Asia" by VWFA Kuala Lumpur, ASEAN-Korea "Emerging Wave" Asian Contemporary Photography Exhibition in Seoul, Korea (2010) and "Verso Manila: contemporary art from the Philippines" in Turin, Italy (2009). She has also been part of Art Dubai, Angkor Photography Festival Cambodia, Obscura Malaysia, Noorderlicht Photography Festival, Holland, and PhotoIreland.

Her work has been shown in institutions such as the National Museum of the Philippines, Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Singapore Art Museum 8Q,

Mongolian National Modern Art Gallery, Hangaram Museum, Korea, National Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung, and Fries Museum of Contemporary Art, Museum Belvedere, Netherlands and is in the collection of the Central Bank of the Philippines, Lumi Photography Museum, Finland and in private collections worldwide.

Navarroza has received a number of awards such as the Asian Cultural Council Fellowship Grant New York, Cultural Center of the Philippines' Thirteen Artists Awards, Ateneo Art Awards, Lumi Photographic Art Awards Helsinki, and was finalist for Singapore Museum Signature Art Prize. As of press time, she is currently nominated for Sovereign Asian Art Prize 2017.

A strong proponent of photobooks and artist books in the Philippines, she released 2 of her own in 2014: "DOMINION" and "Hunt & Gather, Terraria", launched internationally at Offprint Paris and New York Art Book Fair, respectively. Her works appear in recent photography anthologies such as "Photography Today" (Phaidon) and "Contemporary Photography In Asia" (Prestel).

Currently, Navarroza is working and living in Manila. Since her return from some time in Spain, she founded Thousandfold, a platform for contemporary photography and photobooks in Manila which also mounted FotoSemana, the city's first international micro-festival for auteur photography.

She also sings for post-punk rock band The Late Isabel.

Her works are represented by Silverlens Galleries.

AWARDS, RESIDENCIES, AND GRANTS

- 2016 *Merayakan Murni*, Ketemu Project Space Artist Residency, Indonesia
- 2014 *Prudential Eye Awards Singapore*, Nominee
- 2012 *Asian Cultural Council - Silverlens Foundation Fellowship Grant*, New York
- 2011 *Lumi Photographic Art Awards*, Helsinki, Honorary Award Winner
Sovereign Asian Art Prize, Finalist, Hong Kong
Signature Art Prize, Singapore Art Museum-Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation, Finalist, Singapore
Istituto Europeo di Design, Madrid - Master Europeo de Fotografia de Autor, Scholarship
- 2010 *Photography Awards*, 3rd Prize - Still Life
fotoMAGAZIN, Portfolio Prize, Germany
- 2009 *Asian Cultural Council - Silverlens Foundation Fellowship Grant*, New York
PX3 Prix de la Photographie Paris, 3rd Prize - Portraiture, France
- 2007 *Ateneo Art Gallery - Artesan Gallery Artist Residency Grant*, Singapore
Fotomasterskie Peterburgskie, St. Petersburg, Russia
Ateneo Art Awards, Manila
- 2001 *Art Association of the Philippines*, Manila

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *MEDUSA*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2014 *Tierra Salvaje*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2013 *Ultramar pt. 2: Hunt & Gather, Terraria*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2012 *Ultramar pt. 1 Falling Into Place Gathered Throng*, Silverlens, Manila
On Landscape & Some Dislocations, Galería Patrick Domken, Cadaqués, Costa Brava
- 2011 *DOMINION*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2009 *Perhaps it was possibly because*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2008 *When All Is Said And Done*, Artesan Gallery, Singapore
- 2007 *100 Años Entre Nosotros / 100 Years Between Us* (Navarroza homage Frida Kahlo centennial) Galería de Exposiciones, Instituto Cervantes de Manila
Saturnine: A Collection of Portraits, Creatures, Glass & Shadow, Silverlens, Manila / McDermott Gallery, Siem Reap / ArtReflex Gallery, Saint-Petersburg
- 2005 *Polysaccharide: The Dollhouse Drama*, Blacksoup Project Artspace, Manila / Ateneo Art Gallery, Manila / La Trobe University, Bendigo

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

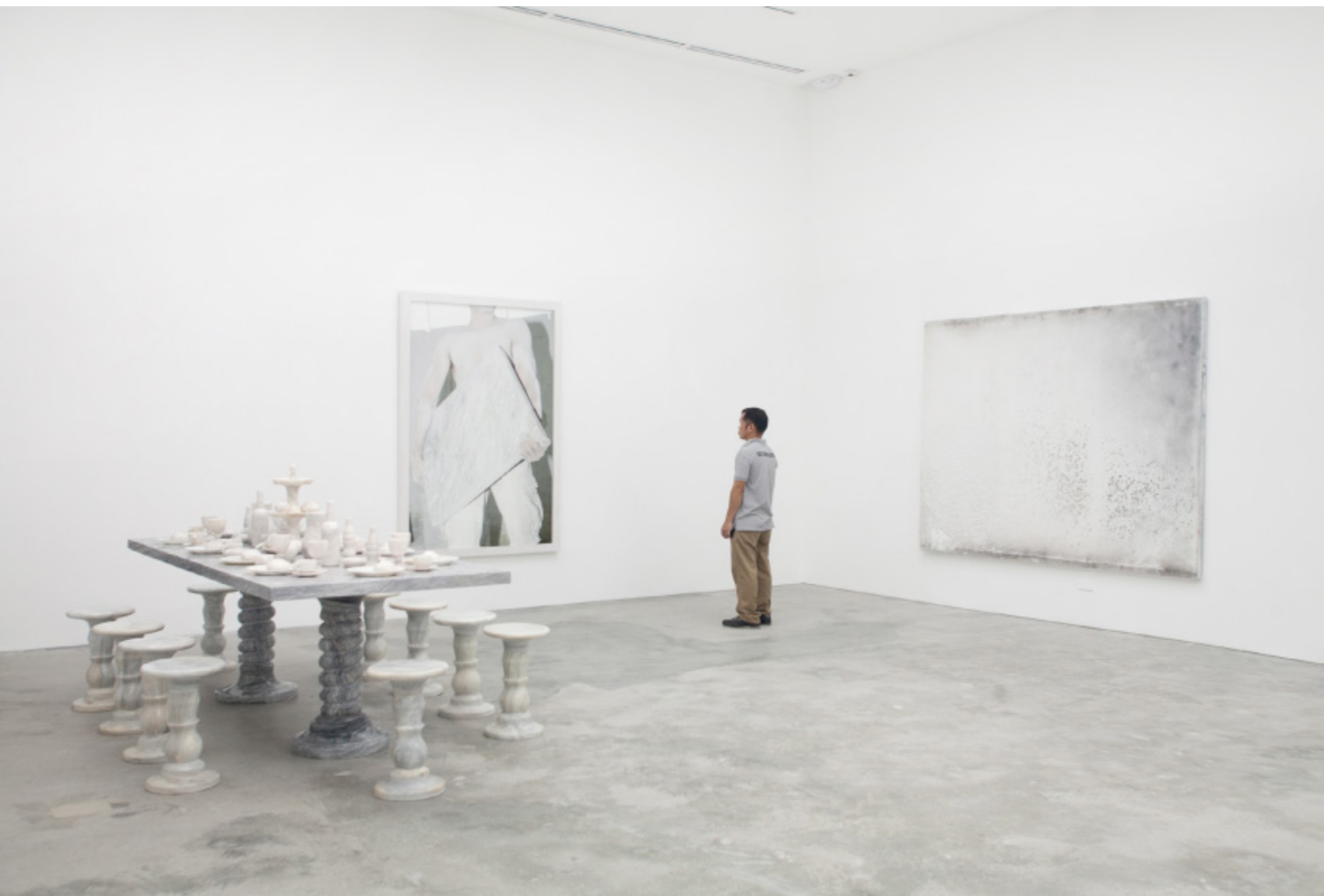
- 2017 *Everywhere There You Are*, Malasimbo Arts & Music Festival 2017, Puerto Galera, Mindoro (with Ling Quisimbing Ramilo)
Shared Residence, Ateneo Art Gallery, Manila
Translación, Inaugural Exhibition, Curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana, Silverlens, Manila
- 2016 *Meryakan Murni*, Sudakara Art Space Jl. Sudamala No. 20, Bali, Indonesia
Marker (special exhibition), Art Dubai, UAE
- 2015 *Surface Tension: Perspective on the Changing Landscape*, Alliance Française de Manille for COP:21, Paris
Asian Women Photography Showcase, Objectifs, Singapore
Traces (Platforms), Finale Gallery, Manila
Platforms (special exhibition), Art Stage Singapore
- 2014 *After Image*, South-East Asian contemporary photography survey show, Singapore Art Museum, SAM 8Q
Imaging Philippine Flora, Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Manila
Ocean of Possibilities, ArtScience Museum, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore
New Natives, Lightbombs Contemporary, Hong Kong
- 2012 *Terra Cognita, Noorderlic Photo Festival*, Museum Belvédère, Heerenveen
The Hope & The Dream in Filipino: Contemporary Photography from the Philippines, The Month of Photography Tokyo 2012, presented by The Photographic Society of Japan and Tokyo Museum of Photography, Tokyo
- 2011 *Asia One projections*, Recyclart, Brussels
Medi(t)ation: Asian Art Biennale 2011, National Museum of Fine Arts, Taichung
- 2010 *25th Asian International Art Exhibition*, Mongolian National Modern Art Gallery, Ulaanbaatar
It Was Always About Forever, (Navarroza & Zicarelli two-person exhibition), Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur
Emerging Wave: ASEAN-Korea Contemporary Photo Exhibition 2010, Hangaram Museum, Seoul
CUT10: Parallel Universe, New Photography from South East Asia, Valentine Willie Fine Art: Kuala Lumpur / Singapore / Yogyakarta / Manila
- 2009 *Verso Manila: Contemporary Filipino Artists in Turin*, Verso Arte Contemporanea, Turin
CUT09: Figure, New Photography from South East Asia, Valentine Willie Fine Art: Kuala Lumpur / Singapore / Yogyakarta / Manila
- 2008 *Swarm In The Aperture: Recent Photography in the Philippines*, The National Museum of the Philippines, Manila
- 2006 *Another Asia*, Fries Museum of Contemporary Art, Leeuwarden

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- 2017 *GR-09022017*, curated by Silja Leifsdottir et al. and published by Fotogalleriet, Oslo
- 2014 *Hunt & Gather, Terraria*, published by Hardworking, Goodlooking x 5 Ports x Studio Wawi Navarroza, Manila
DOMINION, published by Stephanian x Studio Wawi Navarroza, Manila
- 2013 *Contemporary Photography in Asia*, published by Prestel, London
- 2012 *Terra Cognita*, published by Noorderlicht, Netherlands
Portfolio12 - Migrations, published by PhotoIreland, Dublin
- 2011 *Gracias por su visita* by Wawi Navarroza (artist's book), published by Hiraya Gallery, Manila
- 2010 *Curare con l'arte contemporanea* by Rebecca Russo published by Videoinsight®, Turin
Emerging Wave: Asian Contemporary Photography, published by ASEAN-Korea Centre, Seoul
- 2009 *The Philippine Yearbook 2009: 61 Artists Who Will Change The World*, published by The Fookien Times, Manila
- 2006 *Another Asia*, published by Aurora Borealis, Netherlands

EDUCATION

- 2012 Istituto Europeo di Design, Madrid
Master Europeo de Fotografía del Autor
(European Master of Fine Art Photography), scholarship
- 2009 International Center of Photography, New York City
- 2002 De La Salle University, Manila, Philippines
BA Communication Arts, with honors



SILVERLENS

SILVERLENS (Manila), Through its artist representation, institutional collaborations, and exhibition programming including art fairs and gallery partnerships, SILVERLENS aims to place its artists within the broader framework of the contemporary art dialogue. Its continuing efforts to transcend borders across art communities in Asia have earned it recognition from both artists and collectors as one of the leading contemporary art galleries in Southeast Asia. SILVERLENS was founded by Isa Lorenzo and Rachel Rillo in 2004.