

EPILOGUE
RYAN VILLAMAEL

Ryan Villamael

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EPILOGUE

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EPILOGUE



One naturally tends to gravitate towards Ryan Villamael's work—endless sheets of paper, cut and guided into shape by his careful hands—the meticulousness of which speaks of both his skill and his patience. The beauty is unmistakable, but *Epilogue* is an invitation to look closer, to pay attention, and to discover narratives—more open-ended stories than overt commentary—lurking in the intricacies of what seem to be blooming bouquets and otherworldly machinery.

In *Epilogue*, several paper structures grow and spill out of old books on historical victories and defeats, specifically on the post-World War II of the Pacific, carefully collected by the artist on numerous trips to antique shops, book sales, and garage sales over the years. The subject is an interest recently piqued by the current rapidly shifting political climate, and this show is the artist's response to the construction of history and his deliberate action towards both the expansion and cohesion of his personal oeuvre.

The result is sculptural, with Villamael's cutouts rising above the flatness. The construction is more complicated than the paper and felt cutouts early on in his practice. Now, cutouts continue to grow from the books. In making *Epilogue*, Villamael needed to employ more than a blade and involve more than the act of cutting away, an action that requires the measured care, precision. There is patience in action that he says feels like meditation and therapy.

For this show, Villamael adds on to his material, rather than just removing, a practice he began with "Imperium," from his 2014 solo show with Silverlens, and 2015's "Epilogue: Gardens of Eden" and "Epilogue: Ruins of Empire," shown in *Secret Archipelago* in Palais de Tokyo, Paris. For this series, however, he takes structural liberty in rebuilding the ruins of Old Manila—aggressive and almost violent remixed remnants of photographs used in his previous show with Silverlens, *Behold a City*, rather than taking paper refuse from the book itself—within the confines of selected texts on the Pacific War, notably with West-leaning narratives.



Coming back home to Manila from the tail end of the year-long round of residencies (from his win at Ateneo Art Gallery in 2015) Villamael took part in in 2016, as well as his landmark exhibitions at Palais de Tokyo and 2016's Singapore Biennale. Villamael, with *Epilogue*, marks a global awareness of sorts—a peek into Western histories and narratives, resulting in his attempt at taking hold of these stories and telling our own. The current similarities of the tensions leading up to the World War II are bleak and terrifying in their parallelisms, and *Epilogue* feels like a quiet revolt against what feels like history's inevitable cycle.

The pieces, a total of 10 books in varying sizes, broken open to reveal something other than the text written inside, contain structures that are visually precarious, but simultaneously persistent and insistent in their desire to break away from what often feels like propaganda. The rebuilt ruins look like they're trying to escape; they're the truths that refuse to be buried in narratives that others have written and made up. The books exist to say one thing, often from the perspective of the victors, but Villamael's structures, which are made from photographic evidence of what transpired, exist to say something else that's true.

The closer look affords the viewer something beyond skill and craft, that is, a story, or a version of it. Villamael's attempt at telling them—in the absence of perceived histories, propaganda, and personal feelings or biases—involves the act of opening books. And in place of words, there is a collection of images, amalgams of “triumphs and decay,” the resulting stories framed by whoever is reading the images and making the connections, and so, different with each gaze. The woven narratives from these books are as precarious in their “trueness” as Villamael's structures look.

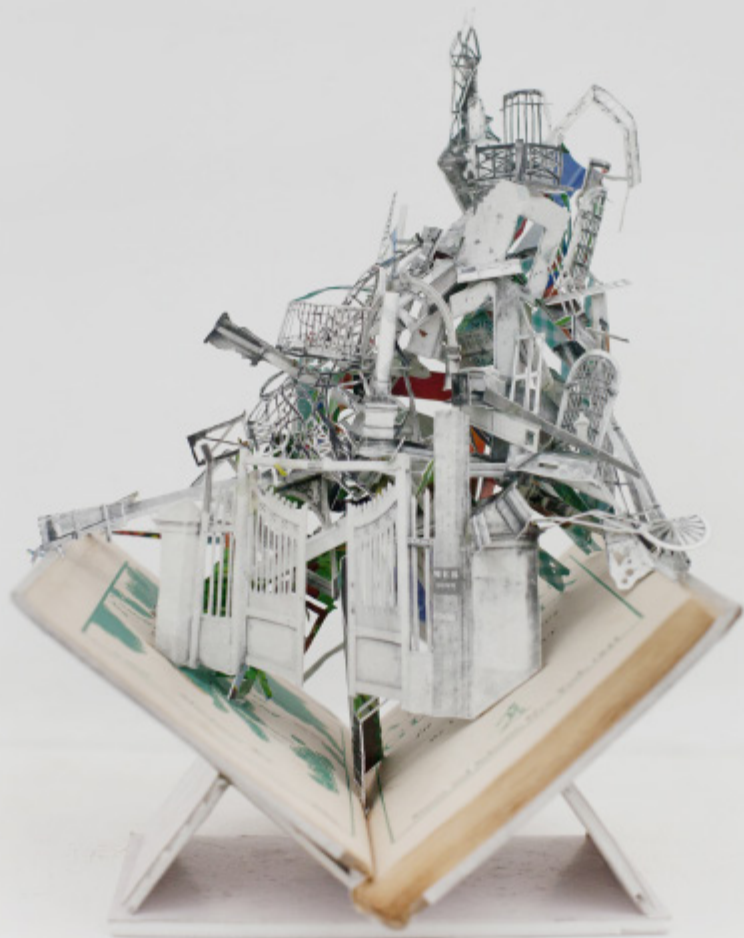
One piece, “Index 10,” shows a map of the United States spanning the entire open spread, devoid of Villamael's reconstruction of Old Manila's ruins. It is the show's quiet centerpiece. In “Index 10,” Villamael does without the building up—the excavation itself already turning the piece sculptural.

Without the superimposed paper structures, it becomes, then, a form of introspection, a looking within itself to get at the story. In a way, it insists that incisions aren't bad; that the inherent cuts within history perhaps shouldn't be hidden away in meaningless messages say little of what really happened. Propped open, with its many layers fanned out, “Index 10” feels like a punctuation to *Epilogue*, an invitation to tell stories as they are. There are no “ugly truths” desperate to escape, and even with all of the pages' injuries, one is compelled to see the beauty of all of it.

Epilogue is an expression of what comes after, a study of the framework of what only appears to be the truth, rather than Villamael's straightforward reportage of facts. It operates on the levels of suggestions and connections, leaving the actual story to be determined by whoever gazes upon his wordless tomes. The result is something like a shifting archive of stories and artifacts, each version of it created by the complexity of different perspectives, likely only connected by this shared experience of looking at the same objects, each resulting narrative different despite being told the same one.

by Carina Santos





Index 1

paper
11.6h x 8.9w x 3.3d in
(29.5h x 22.5w x 8.5d cm)
2017



Index 2

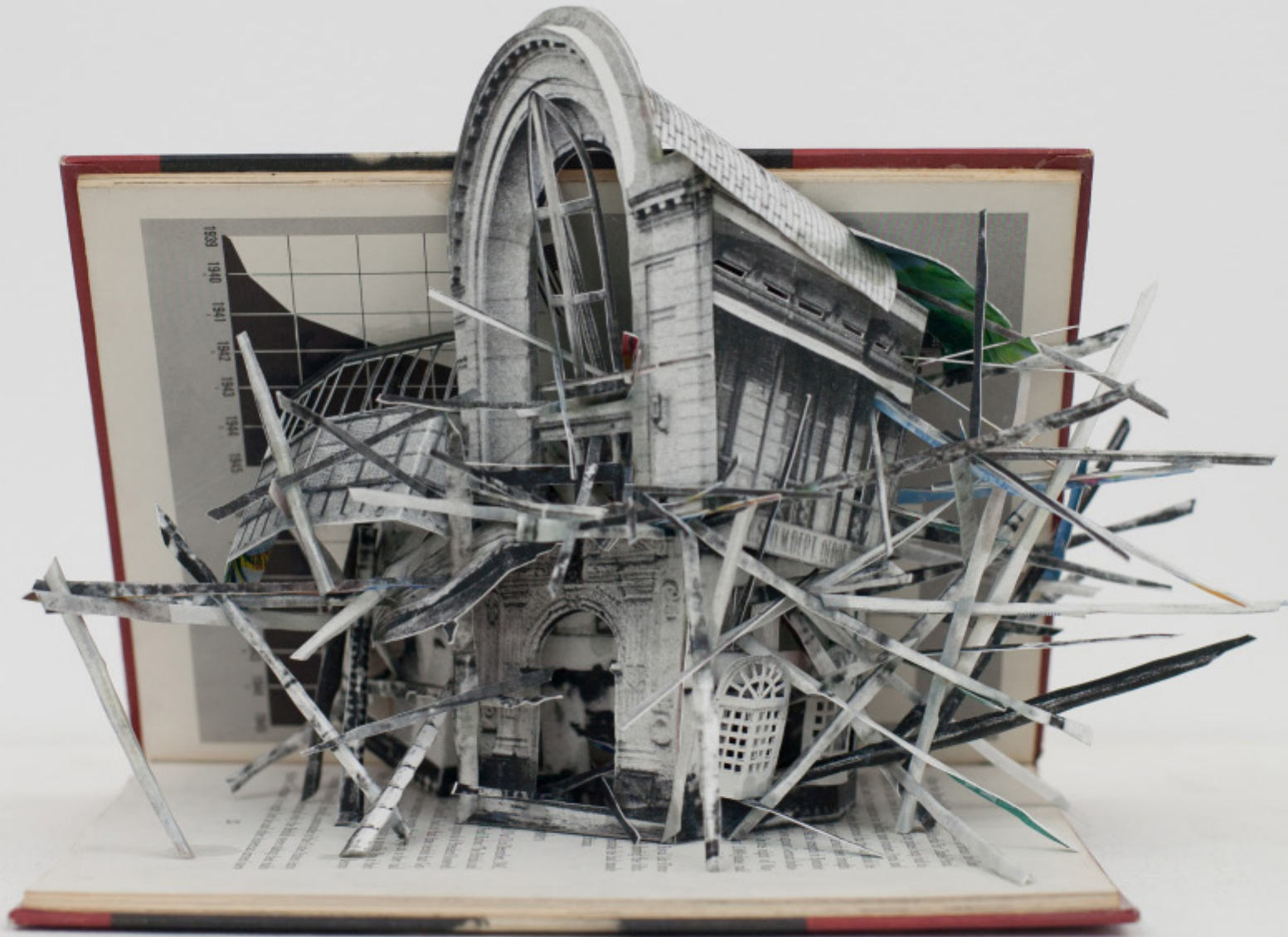
paper
14h x 11.4w x 7.8d in
(35.5h x 29w x 20d cm)
2017



Index 3

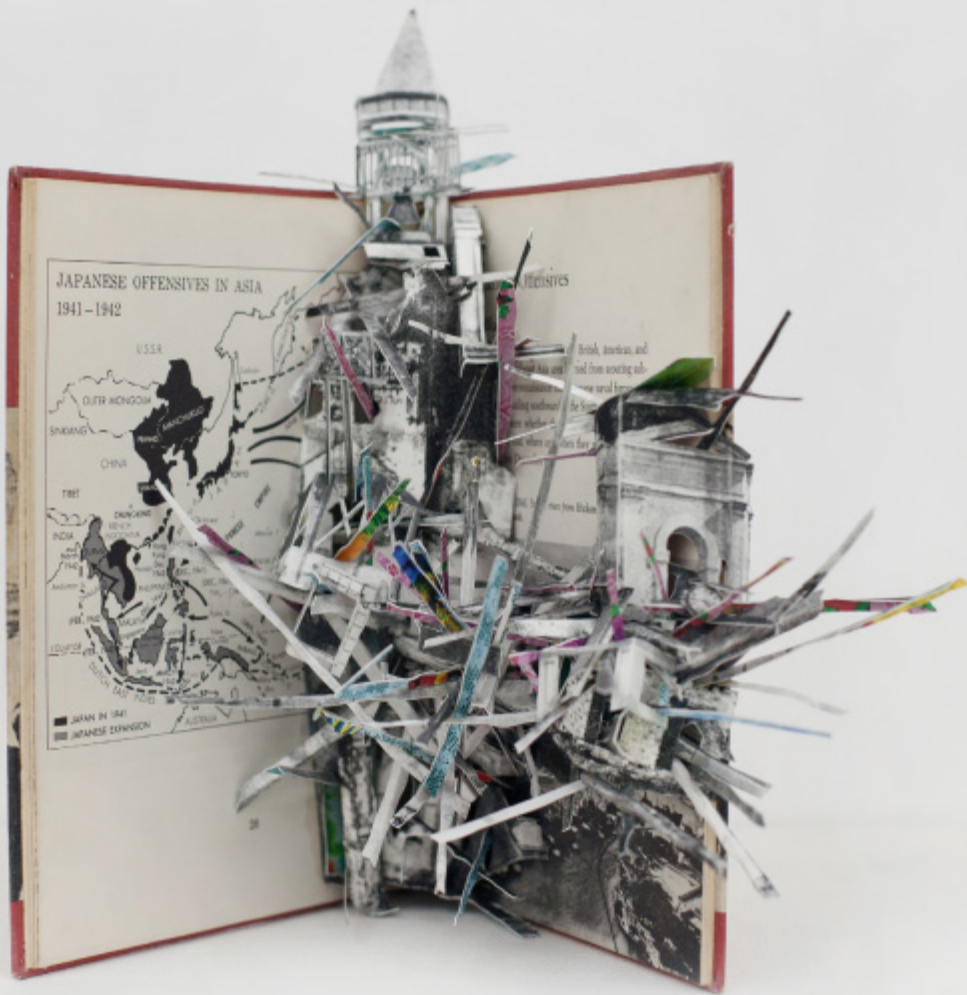
paper
11.4h x 16.5w x 6.3d in
(29h x 42w x 16d cm)
2017





Index 4

paper
3.3h x 10.6w x 7.5d in
(8.5h x 27w x 19d cm)
2017



Index 5

paper
 11.2h x 10w x 9.4d in
 (28.5h x 25.4w x 24d cm)
 2017



Annexation

paper
 8.25h x 6.75w x 14.5d in
 (21h x 17.1w x 36.8d cm)
 2017



Index 6

paper
9.8h x 11.4w x 9.8d in
(25h x 29w x 25d cm)
2017



Index 7

paper
 14.6h x 12.6w x 13d in
 (37h x 32w x 33d cm)
 2017



Index 8

paper
 110.3h x 8.46w x 9.8d in
 (26.25h x 21.5w x 25d cm)
 2017





Index 9

paper
12h x 19.5w x 14d in
(30.48h x 49.5w x 35.56d cm)
2017

Index 10
paper
10h x 20w x 14.75d in
(25.4h x 50.8w x 37.46d cm)
2017



RYAN VILLAMAEL

Ryan Villamael (b. 1987, Laguna; lives and works in Quezon City) is one of the few artists of his generation to have abstained from the more liberal modes of art expression to ultimately resort to the more deliberate handiwork found in cut paper. While his method follows the decorative nature innate to his medium of choice, from the intricately latticed constructions emerge images that defy the ornamental patchwork found in the tradition of paper cutting, and instead becomes a treatise of a unique vision that encompasses both the inner and outer conditions that occupy the psyche—which range from the oblique complexity of imagined organisms to the outright effects of living in a convoluted city.

Villamael was included in several group shows while still pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Painting from the University of the Philippines up to the time of his graduation in 2009. His works have been shown in Manila, Singapore, Hong Kong, the UK, Australia, and Paris. Although his persistence in sustaining a discipline more often subjected to handicraft has been evident from his works, Villamael maintains that his primary interest lies rather on the conceptual significance of craft in the process of creating contemporary art, and continues to recognize the possibility of how his works can still evolve under this light.

He is a recipient of the Ateneo Art Award in 2015 and the three international residency grants funded by the Ateneo Art Gallery and its partner institutions: La Trobe University Visual Arts Center in Bendigo, Australia; Artesan Gallery in Singapore and Liverpool Hope University in Liverpool, UK. He participated in the 2016 Singapore Biennale.

AWARDS

- 2015 *Ateneo Art Awards*, Winner
- 2013 *Ateneo Art Awards*, Shortlisted

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *Epilogue*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2016 *Unknown Land*, La Trobe University, Victoria
- 2015 *Behold A City*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2014 *Isles*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2013 *Territory*, Silverlens, Manila
Kosmik, West Gallery, Manila
- 2012 *Flatland*, Silverlens, Manila
Richard Koh Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- 2011 *New Specimens*, West Gallery, Manila
Cut Felt, Silverlens, Manila

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *Shared Coordinates*, in collaboration with Edouard Malingue Gallery & ROH Projects, The Arts House, Singapore
Translación, Inaugural Exhibition, Curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana, Silverlens, Manila
- 2016 *Singapore Biennale: An Atlas of Mirrors*, Singapore
Art Stage Jakarta, ROH Projects, Jakarta
Art Basel, Hong Kong
Art Fair Philippines, Manila
- 2015 *In Transit*, CCP, Manila
Secret Archipelago, Palais De Tokyo, France
Art Fair Philippines, Manila
Art Basel, Hong Kong
- 2014 *Bookends*, Blanc Gallery, Manila

- Art Taipei 2014*, Taipei
Makiling X, Corredor Gallery, Manila
Tabletop, Altro Mondo Manila
Art Fair Philippines, Manila
- 2013 *Still, Blanc*, Manila
Art Taipei 2013, Taipei
Fundacion Broke, Art Informal, Manila
Ateneo Art Awards 2004 - 2013: A Restrospective, Ateneo Art Gallery, Manila
Relikt, Silverlens, Singapore
- 2012 *Ley Hunting*, Silverlens, Singapore
Silverlens Gallery, Art HK 12, Hong Kong
Incidental Pleasures, MO Space, Makati City
- 2011 *X-Mas Show*, Manila Contemporary, White Space, Manila
Munnyfestation, 359 Blanc Compound, Manila
Dia Delos Mueros, Secret Fresh, Ronac Art Center, Manila
Working in Progress, curated by Adeline Ooi,
A Three-Man Show, Silverlens, Manila
On the Radar: 6 New Symptoms. Curated by Gary-Ross Pastrana,
Silverlens, Manila
- 2010 *12 x 9*, West Gallery, Manila
- 2009 *Atat*, Tin-Aw Art Gallery, Manila
Degree Exhibition 2009, Corredor Gallery, College of Fine Arts,
University of the Philippines, Manila
- 2008 *Impacho*, Leona Art Restaurant, Manila
Pre Thesis Deliberation: Symposium Series 2008 Curated by Virginia
B. Dandan, Corredor Gallery, College of Fine Arts, University of the
Philippines, Diliman, Manila
In / Definite Affinities, Curated by Nestor Olarte Vinluan White Box
Gallery, stall 59, Marikina Shoe Expo, Cubao, Quezon City
- 2005 *Letres y Figuras*, Corredor Gallery, College of Fine Arts, University of
the Philippines, Diliman, Manila

- 2004 *Ingress / Egress (Philippine High School for the Arts Senior Exhibition)*
GSIS Gallery, Manila

EDUCATION

- 2004-2009 University of the Philippines - Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines
Bachelor of Fine Arts, Major in Painting
- 2001-2004 Philippine High School for the Arts, Mt. Makiling, Los Baños,
Laguna
Major in Visual Arts Program

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.

