



ECHO / GREGORY HALILI

Gregory Halili

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2017

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image by Rachel Rillo (SILVERLENS)

ECHO

A life-size skeleton created entirely from uncut, found corals atop a massive, raw driftwood; skull profiles and open hands meticulously painted and fashioned on giant clams and mother of pearl shells—the new works of artist Gregory Halili may be seen, from an untrained perspective, as nothing more than a visual paean to the sea, a sculptural ode to that overwhelming space that still remains foreign to us despite man's numerous explorations of it. But a Halili piece doesn't leave its audience just scratching the surface; just like the sea, it holds waves of truths and memories.

While Halili is more known in the art circle for his miniatures, minute yet intricate images that have always paid homage to his homeland and its cultural rarities, the artist, in his new visual offering titled Echo, has curiously veered away from the artistic tradition that typifies his oeuvre. Instead of painting delicate and wistful portraits and sacrosanct imagery, Halili has taken on a more sculptural approach and shifted to using large materials.

His biggest piece Phenomenon measures 7 x 2.4 x 2.9 feet, for instance, and took the longest time to finish due to its complexity. The change was a gradual progression, but it meant that the artist, whose training was pure painting, had to go out of his way to understand the creation of a singular sculpture. Thus, Halili's works now are also a testament to the artist's will to create and finish what he has started—a story of personal struggle and determination.

The decision to eschew small materials also meant more physical labor and travel time for sourcing the items that went to building his larger pieces, with Halili combing and searching for found corals along the beaches of Calatagan and Anilao, Batangas for the past two years. Scouring for samples in the right size and form was one of the hardest parts Halili had to endure for his art; there could be hundreds of samples but only two to three will be the perfect match.

But what kindled this obsession? A trip to the beach one summer. It didn't seem odd to Halili that the washed up and bleached corals he has originally chanced upon while combing through the debris in the shore mirrored human bones. Halili then was able to create a small skeletal hand on the spot. The semblance was immediately symbolic—and this resonates within Halili's latest repertoire.

Admittedly, Halili's homecoming greatly affected and influenced his art; it has now come full circle. After living in the United States for 25 years, Halili and his family now fully reside in the country. Years before, majority of Halili's pieces were inspired by and dedicated to unravel the Philippines' brilliance and beauty by way of his tipos del pais (types of the country) and letras y figuras (letters and figures)—all meant to trigger reminiscences. Now, his new body of work, although still nostalgic in a way, is a specific visual retort to the alarming state of our seas and milieu.

Composed of 15 works, Halili's Echo is a continuation of the artist's exploration of natural materials and one's symbiotic connection with nature. It presents the residual and lingering affection of man's doings to nature, the physical manifestation of the state of our environment, and, particularly, the life and death cycle that man and the elements go through. Many of us are blind to these realities, only mourning loss and death when we are faced with it head on. Halili then confronts his audience with this supposed macabre subject, but he does it so beautifully that his pieces, more than just being artistic expressions of mortality, alternately become vessels of memories and vestiges of truths.

There are infinite shapes that death can take, and the impressions they make upon us are just as varied. In Echo, Halili not only illuminates this fragility and fleetingness as a way to question one's impact to the world and in the best way he knows how, but shows his audience its non-gruesome nature, that the passing of life is an inevitable stage where one ultimately reconnects with nature to bring forth new life.

What's next for Halili? To date, the artist is still learning the different qualities of mother of pearl shells and preparing himself to tackle a pair of giant clams, about 37 inches and a hundred pounds each. At the end of the day, though, whatever the subject matter is for Halili's future visual and sculptural exhaustions, we can only expect them to be always honest and from the heart.

by Pam Brooke A. Casin

from left:

Echo 2

giant clam, oil
18 x 10 x 7.5 in
(45.72 x 25.4 x 19.05 cm)
2016

Echo 3

giant clam, oil
14.5 x 9 x 16.75 in
(36.83 x 22.86 x 42.55 cm)
2016

Echo 1

giant clam, oil
12.5 x 7 x 5.5 in
(31.75 x 17.78 x 13.97 cm)
2016



Relic 1

coral, steel, wood
27.5 x 13 x 7.5 in
(69.85 x 33.02 x 19.05 cm)
2016



Relic 2

coral, steel, wood
26.5 x 16 x 8.5 in
(67.31 x 40.64 x 21.59 cm)
2016



Phenomenon
corals, wood
23 x 75 x 9 in
(58.42 x 190.5 x 22.86 cm)
2016





Vestige III

oil on mother of pearl, wood base
9.8 x 10 in
(24.89 x 25.4 cm)
2016



Vestige IV

oil on mother of pearl, wood base
9.8 x 9.5 in
(24.89 x 24.13 cm)
2016



Vestige V

oil on mother of pearl, wood base
7.3 x 8 in
(18.54 x 20.32 cm)
2016



Vestige VI

oil on mother of pearl, wood base
7.5 x 8.3 in
(19.05 x 21.08 cm)
2016



Vestige VII

oil on mother of pearl, wood base
7 x 8 in
(17.78 x 20.32 cm)
2016



Vestige VIII

oil on mother of pearl, wood base
7.5 x 7.3 in
(19.05 x 18.54 cm)
2016



Vestige IX

oil on mother of pearl, wood base
8 x 8.5 in
(20.3 x 21.6 cm)
2016



Memory I

oil on mother of pearl
10 x 9.49 in
(25.4 x 24.1 cm)
2016



Relic 3

coral, steel, wood
10h x 5.75w x 3.75d in
(25.4h x 14.6w x 9.52d cm)
2016

GREGORY HALILI

Gregory Halili (b. 1975, lives and works in Manila) carves and paints mother-of-pearl shells, creating memento moris. Halili received his B.F.A. from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. He returned to the Philippines in 2014 after 25 years in the United States. Halili's work focuses on the art of miniatures with interest in the notion and idea of memory, life, death, and cycle.

His work has appeared in numerous exhibitions and shows, including the John Michael Kohler Arts Center in Sheboygan, Wisconsin; The Butler Institute of American Art in Youngstown, Ohio; The Hammond Museum and Sculpture Garden in Salem, New York; Ayala Museum in Makati City; Jorge B. Vargas Museum at the University of the Philippines in Quezon City; West Gallery in Quezon City; Silverlens Gallery in Makati City and Nancy Hoffman gallery in New York City. He is one of the Filipino artists presented in the Singapore Biennale 2016.

AWARDS

- 1998 Millennia of Philippine Art, Outstanding Young Filipino-American Artist
United Nations Postal Administration, design for 21-cent stamp
- 1994 Art Institute of New Jersey, Outstanding Visual Artist
"Trenton Times" (New Jersey), All Academic Team
- 1993 Governor's School of the Arts Scholar (New Jersey)
Who's Who Among American Students
- 1991 AAA Nationwide Poster Contest, First Place
- 1990 NASA Mars Settlement Contest, Honorable Mention
- 1989 Citibank Calendar Contest, First Place

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2017 *Echo*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2015 *Memento*, Silverlens, Singapore
- 2014 *Memento*, Silverlens, Manila
Memento, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- 2013 *Reflections*, West Gallery, Manila
- 2012 *LOVE and LOSS*, Silverlens, Manila
- 2011 *In Search of Paradise*, West Gallery, Manila,
- 2010 *Still Life*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2007 *Orchids*, West Gallery, Manila
- 2006 *Moment of Sanctuary*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
Relicarios, Jorge B.Vargas Museum, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Manila
- 2005 *Relicarios*, Ayala Museum, Manila
Homage to the People of the Philippine Cordilleras - II, West Gallery, Manila
- 2004 *Orchids*, Project Space, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
Homage to the People of the Philippine Cordilleras, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
Homage to the People of the Philippine Cordilleras, West Gallery, Manila
The Butterfly Collection, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin
- 2003 *After Amorsolo*, Jorge B.Vargas Museum, University of the Philippines, Manila
Butterfly Collection: Bamboo Series, West Gallery, Manila

- Conversation in Contemplation*, Project Space, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Conversation in Contemplation*, Jorge B. Vargas Museum, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Manila
- Watercolors in Miniature*, South Brunswick Public Library, Monmouth Junction, New Jersey
- 2002 *The Butterfly Collection*, The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, Ohio
- Nostalgia*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Nostalgia II*, West Gallery, Manila
- Miniatures*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2000 *Miniatures*, West Gallery, Manila
- 1999 *Butterfly Collection*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Miniatures*, Consulate General of the Philippines, New York
- 1998 West Gallery, Manila
- Project Space, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York

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
- Tiny Treasures*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Art Fair Philippines*, Manila
- 2015 *Bazaar Art Jakarta*, Indonesia
- HEY! Modern Art & Pop Culture/Act III*, La Halle Saint Pierre, Paris
- Miniatures: Small Contemporary Works*, University of Wyoming Art Museum, Wyoming
- In the Pink*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Art Basel Hong Kong*, Hong Kong
- Art Fair Philippines*, Manila
- 2014 *Art Taipei 2014*, Taipei
- Triumph*, Ayala Museum, Manila
- Summer*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Art Fair Philippines*, Manila

- 2013 *Winter Blues*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Forty Years*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Triumph of Philippine Art*, Montclair State University, New Jersey
- Triumph of Philippine Art*, Fisher Museum of Art, University of Southern California
- Theory and Practice of the Small Painting*, Equator Art Projects, Singapore
- 2012 *Women: By, Of, About*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- 2011 *Project Space: Black and White*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Celebration of Music*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- All That Glitters*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- 2010 *REAL(ist)*, Selby Gallery, John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida
- 2009 *Back to Cezanne*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- Art of the Still Life*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2008 Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2007 *Flying the Coop*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Through the Palette's Eye*, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila
- New York - Manila - New York*, Ayala Museum, Manila
- 2006 *Drawing the Line*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Visage*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Circles*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Small Works*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2005 *2005 Collector's Show*, Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock
- Small Scale*, West Gallery, Manila, Philippines
- 2004 *Celestial Boundaries*, Montclair State University, New Jersey
- Miniature Portraits*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- 2003 *Landscape: Unique Views*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Waterscape*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- 2002 *Celebrating 30 Years*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Small Scale*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Summer*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Small Works Exhibit*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- The Miniature Show*, Graystone, San Francisco
- Collector's Show*, The Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock

- Winter Orchidarium*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- 2001 *Celebration of Art*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- I Love New York*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Living Minutiae*, Selby Gallery, John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida
- Many Moons*, Hammond Museum and Japanese Stroll Garden, Salem, New York
- Object of Desire II*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Re-Presenting Representation IV*, Arnot Art Museum, Elmira, New York
- 2000 *Celebration of Music*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- 1999 *Gateways*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- American Realism*, M.A. Doran Gallery, Tulsa, Oklahoma
- Magic of Venice*, Qualita Fine Arts, Las Vegas Nevada
- Object of Desire*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Summer Light*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- 1998 *Collector's Show*, Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock
- 64th Annual International Exhibition*, Miniature Painters, Sculptors and Gravers Society of Washington, D.C., North Bethesda, Maryland
- 1997 *Small Works*, Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- 1996 *Collector's Show*, Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock
- Artists' House Gallery, Philadelphia
- Small Scale*, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York
- Summer Pleasures*, Summer Treasures, Nancy Hoffman Gallery, New York

EDUCATION

- 1998 B.F.A., University of the Arts, Philadelphia

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.