



**museum** of  
**many** things

GERALDINE JAVIER





ARTIST'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## Geraldine Javier and Madame A.: Artist and Collector

When does an artist become a collector? or, to rephrase the question, “when does a collector become an artist?” and “when does a collection become an artwork?”

If anyone has been to the John Soane Museum in London they will know the confusion. The most famous architect of his own time, Soane bought objects: paintings, sculptures, architectural fragments, added his own fantasy drawings of gigantic buildings and then built a house to fit the collection. But it is no ordinary house.<sup>1</sup> With its room within rooms, windows and corridors at unexpected places it is unique and highly personal. The objects are installed not by any classificatory order but by eye: surprise after surprise, strange juxtapositions. The collection and its setting became something more than the sum of its parts: **they became one coherent art work.**

Many artists too have been collectors: Edgar Degas in Paris, Jacob Epstein in London, Rufino Tamayo in Oaxaca, Mexico, Fernando Zobel in Manila. Many, like Degas, have planned museums, only a very few, like Tamayo, have made them.<sup>2</sup> Artists surround themselves with things: art, artefacts, memorabilia, anything that may trouble or stimulate their imagination. Many will arrange these things in very individual ways: this is what makes artist's houses so very interesting.<sup>3</sup> Such artists put things together, adapt them, group them and make temporary museums of them. In the days before the Internet, before artists stored images in a laptop but rather in “real space”, most artists would have their own museum of postcards stuck to their wall: images of famous paintings or curiosities that intrigued them.

Geraldine Javier is a collector, both of other artist's works and of the things she finds in the markets of Manila and environs. As an artist she is obsessed with the power of images, as a collector with the power of objects. That objects have such a power or vitality is an insight that high culture (Western and Asian) suppressed when encountering animist societies. (Though Filipino Catholicism, like Mexican Catholicism, remains heavily imbued with such animism.)

Fabrics, plants, animals, popular art, handicrafts, things that are odd in some way, such as the small vitrines in this exhibition. They in turn contain many things that she has collected or else has purchased specifically - but all blended together into something new. Like most artist collectors she is not systematic, but instinctual.

Making collections or museums as artworks and presenting them in exhibition is not unusual in art today: one can think of Christian Boltanski, Annette Messager, Daniel Spoerri, Susan Hiller and many others doing so. Another related activity,





artist's "interventions" into museums, are now so frequent an occurrence as to be a specific genre: prominent examples being Peter Greenaway at Museum Boymans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (1991), Fred Wilson at Maryland Historical Society's (1992), Sophie Calle at the Freud Museum (1999). Such interventions, and mock museums in the mode of Duchamp's *Boite en valise* (1935) or Marcel Broodthaer's *Musée d'Art Moderne, Département des Aigles* (1968)<sup>4</sup> have been progenitors for a widespread Art of Institutional Critique, where artists seek to draw attention to the ideological status of the museum.<sup>5</sup>

What Geraldine presents in this exhibition is not an art of institutional critique, but an art of imagination and transformation. Her museum is a highly unusual one in that it combines her own collections with the residues of an older collection. The apparent power of objects<sup>6</sup>, story-telling, memories, fears and the presence of this earlier collector (known only as Madame A.) echo across the many vitrines and through the many objects.<sup>7</sup> The search for this elusive personality is most especially the subject of the accompanying film.

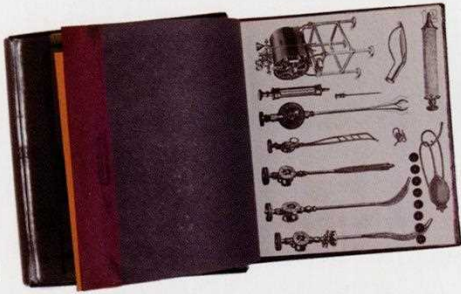
We collect and make museums to preserve memories. The collection that lingers in my mind is that of my grandmother who bought things obsessively: a corridor of grandfather clocks, endless glass domes and vitrines filled with stuffed birds or parian-ware statuettes of Victorian heroes, General Havelock or Florence Nightingale. To me as a child her house seemed to be where time had stopped: life and memories left on pause. Geraldine's vitrines are different: things seem rather to be about to happen; there is a curious blend of the scientific display and the spirit house. Her vitrine world is populated with frog skeletons, stuffed birds and hooded dolls - some complete, some fragmentary - all waiting for their story to begin. (It is of course the viewer who must write that story.)

There is a black humour here and also a delight in the natural world. In one larger key work there is a hammock with an embroidered figure that acts as her own self-portrait. It swings in a bower that in its blissful beauty suggests the innocence of the Garden of Eden or the garden of a mythical childhood; but on the other side is cradled the clothed skeleton of a cat. There is a further ironic riposte in one small vitrine where a frog skeleton swings on a tating swing.

How do the paintings fit with this museum and this search for a lost collector? When Geraldine first showed me her painting with sheep *Hallelujah!* I was not sure what to say. These sheep seemed so amateurish, like children's toys from a thrift store; they floated over the surface like the symbols for clouds or rain used by weather forecasters or like fridge magnets over the fridge and yet... the landscape was so richly painted, the representation of the aftermath of a forest fire so well made... and the sheep floated up to heaven with the smoke of the burned forest. Do they, as the title suggests, sing as they







ascend?<sup>8</sup> The painting became both stranger and more compelling the longer I looked at it. Were the sheep comic, surreal, absurd or tragic?

Was this allegorical? This show, after all, is the culmination of a series of three exhibitions where she focussed on, *inter alia*, bible stories. Jesus often spoke of sheep and shepherds and has himself been

called one *Agnus Dei* - Lamb of God. Is the black sheep Satan? If so he looks remarkably amiable. Like all her work this seems simultaneously visionary and comic, simultaneously sombre and carnivalesque. And, of course, it is imbued with her normal *joie de faire* (pleasure in making)

It had all seemed so simple when she had described her intentions some months earlier for the show: images of environmental disasters: deforestation, trees dying because of pollution, birds falling from the sky for some yet unexplained reason, birds doused in black oil from tanker spills. Geraldine the eco-warrior. But, good art is, of course, always much more complex than that: as she began making the works the exhibition became richer and more complex. The journey is what makes it, not the preliminary planning.

"Why have you made the wounds rectangular?" I asked, looking at the first of the paintings that became *Crying*. "Why not just slash the canvas a la Fontana, leaving a slit like a true knife wound." She did not reply, the reasons may be more subconscious, instinctual anyway. It is not for her to answer: it is for me to work out. Perhaps it is to do with geometry and typologies? Or the insertion of culture (defined so often by the right angle) aggressively into nature. Moreover, the wounds are ambiguous: they could equally have opened of their accord, the rich red fabrics inviting us to reach out and, like Doubting Thomas, touch.

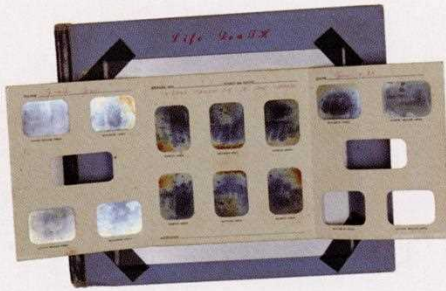
Museums are about a culture's memory: many of these works echo, consciously or unconsciously in other works. *The Black Tree* may remind some of the famous Jacques Callot print *The Hanging* of 1632 where, like strange fruit, twenty-one renegade soldiers hang in various states of decomposition on a tree. It is an image John Boorman re-used in his film *Excalibur*. Or, if we think instead of the movie *Aliens* and the scene where we find people hung on the wall immersed in or merged with some foetid mess. This is the most abject work Geraldine has made - a work where the body loses definition and boundary and is reduced to coagulated fluids and mush. In its pair *The Red Tree* small birds sleep contentedly in hammocks.

There are several constant poles in her work; the pastoral, often associated with childhood and Eden, death, the uncanny, the end of things and the strange beauty of the apocalypse. There is also humour. The dead who animate this exhibition are sometimes funny, but sometimes macabre. As I write this essay the image in our heads is one we have not seen clearly: that of Muammar Gaddafi's body abused and dragged through the streets of Sirte, then exposed, slowly rotting in the African heat, for public humiliation

ARTIST BOOKS:  
(Artist Collection)

- i. Probe
- ii. Life Death
- iii. Catch





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and derision. What does it mean to make things from dead people or animals or to clothe them? Here it is a homage not a mockery. (One can think of the pathos of dead things treated as alive, as in the Victorian vogue for photographs of dead children as opposed to our fear of the dead coming alive once more - as seen in zombie movies.)<sup>9</sup> Of course, it is no new thing

to make art with the dead: some of earliest known works of art are human skulls covered with clay. And, of course death has been the subject of much art, from the medieval dance of death (clearly echoed here), the inverted rituals of carnival<sup>10</sup> to Joseph Beuys' performance *How to explain pictures to a dead hare* (1965).

Civilization is based on collecting and is epitomised by museums. The museum as carnival - which is what the museums of Madame A. and Geraldine effectively are - is paradoxical because it represents civilization and culture, but in its upturning and merging of categories enacts the opposite of that typological instinct that underlies the modern museum, where everything is put in its correct place. (If there is something common to many artist's museums it is the spoofing of typologies, the wilful confusing of categories. What makes hers so special is its poetic qualities: she is not fulfilling a concept but making a world.

Where does this exhibition stand in her work? It seems to be perhaps a key transitional phase - a switching point. After ten years of exhibiting she feels, if not painted out, in need of a break. She will have no painting exhibitions in 2012. But this explosion of making in another genre that this exhibition bears witness to is a more fruitful and certainly a more active way of lying fallow than just "taking a break". For her this exhibition is a beginning not an end: the seeds for future works and exhibitions are germinating here.

And what of this puzzling film? It began when there was the suggestion of installing part of the exhibition in the Asian Civilization Museum and we thought of using one of the video display panels to put on a documentary where four talking heads "explain" the works. My initial script (printed here) was for that, but in the hands of Geraldine, Raymond Lee and Jet Leyco it has become something much stranger and wonderful. It has been wholly transformed, just as the whole exhibition is characterised by such acts of transformation.

The film is full of hints and uncertainties. Who is this curator? Certainly not I, but rather a cold fish sent to research something he does not understand. Who is this artist? Not Geraldine. Is this artist a true witness or a fantasist? Can we believe her? The film has strange discrepancies: we are told that she lived in the jungle but



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clearly this house that the film is made in, though old is in a town and now surrounded by skyscrapers. Is this a town house she once lived in? We are not told: we must imagine this.

Imagine! And remember! This is an exhibition where the viewer is very much asked to participate in an imaginative way. For me, after thirty four years in the art world the making of this museum has been one of the most unusual and most inspiring projects I have been involved in. Formally inventive, rich with associations, “wickedly” humorous but profoundly serious this is an exhibition not just to linger in but to engage with actively, searching for details, making up our own stories for the vitrines, imagining these characters. It is our chance to, as Geraldine titled one email to me, “Laugh with Madame”.<sup>11</sup>

TONY GODFREY

(Endnotes)

1. In a lecture I once attended the art historian Charles Jencks once referred to it as the first post-modernist building.
2. The Mexican Tamayo, disturbed at how the gringos were taking away so much pre-Columbian pottery from Mexico converted a town house into a museum where his collection of pre-Columbian pottery was exhibited in a manner reminiscent of his paintings. Nasirun in Jogjakarta is doing something similar for Indonesian ethnic arts.
3. Think of the fascination photographers always had with the residences of Pablo Picasso. I mean here the living bits of their flat or house, not the studio.
4. Both of which appear in a current show on artist's museums at the Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, England. This is very much an exhibition focused on “institutional critique”. Museum Show Part I ends 19th November; Part II runs 9th December to 5th February.
5. See Exhibition Catalogue, *Museum as Muse*, Museum Of Modern Art, New York, 1999 and James Putnam, *Art and Artifact - The Museum as Medium*, Revised Edition, London, 2009.
6. One of the objects from Madame A's collection epitomises this: a piece of dried and tangled skin that is according to her hand written label “the dried lingam of some large jungle animal (banteng or gaur?) that mountain people in Cambodia rub into coconut water and drink when they have a fever.” Scribbled on the back of the label she has added “I tried this when I had a fever. It did not work”.
7. The objects from her collection have been absorbed and often transformed in some way by Geraldine. For example, three of the birds in *The Red Tree* were once hers.
8. Perhaps singing Carl Ruggles' 1921 song *General Booth Enters into Heaven*.
9. During our discussions Geraldine was intrigued by my descriptions of Mr. Potter's Museum of Curiosities, a Victorian museum where dead animals were stuffed and arranged in tableaux: cats playing cards, birds at a funeral service, toads at a gym.
10. The most famous dance of death is the widely copied cycle of woodcuts made by Hans Holbein. For carnival see Mikhail Bakhtin's writings and also Tim Hyman, *Carnavalesque*, Brighton, 2000
11. email to author 9th September. The email enclosed an image of the vitrine that later provided the title for the curio cabinet *Frog Pissing Contest*.







**9 Keys, 9 Rooms, 9 Secrets**

2011, mixed media, 41.5 x 31.5 x 4.5 cm



Red Tree

2011, mixed media, 218 x 155 x 76 cm





Black Tree

2011, mixed media, 180 x 72 x 72 cm

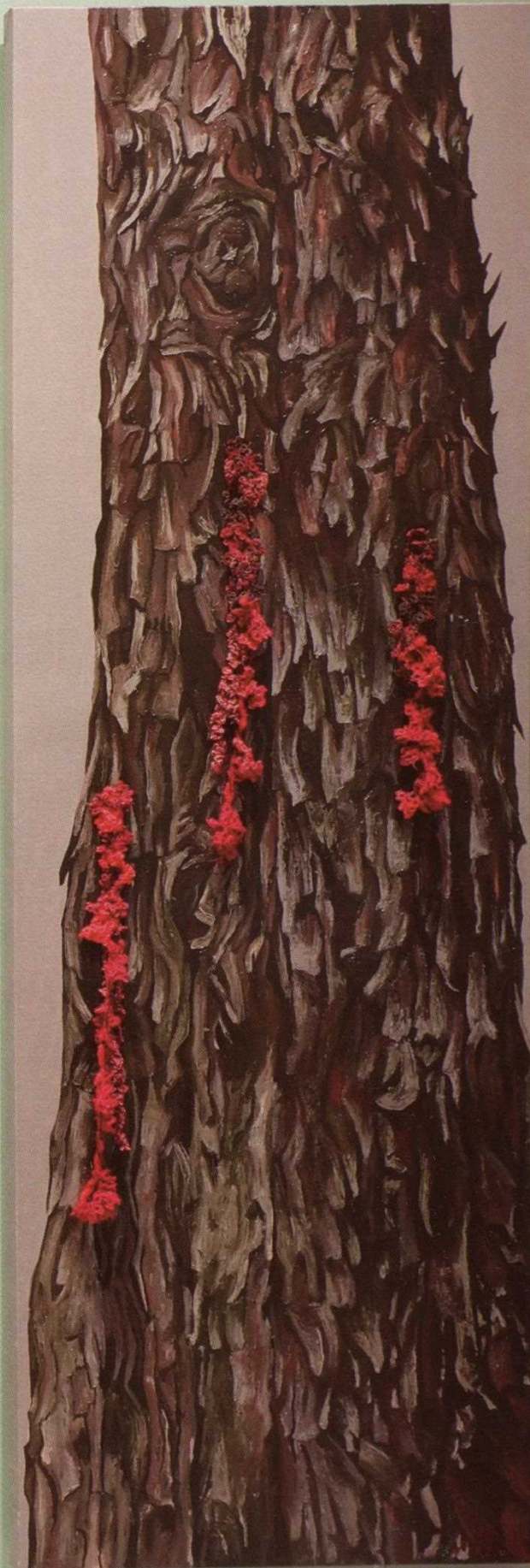




Crying, 2011, oil on canvas and tatting lace, 183 x 61 cm each (x 4 panels)











*detail*







*detail*



*opposite page and above*

Sing Me A Song

2011, mixed media, 175 x 227 x 100 cm





*from left to right (front view)*

Cabinet of Curiosities

(Madame A. – Madame A. In Flames),

(Madame A. – Frog Pissing Contest),

(Madame A. – Strange Fruits In My Womb...Jackfruit, Persimmon, Guanabana),

2011, cabinet with hammered leaves, vitrines and objects, 182 x 65 x 35.5 cm each





(rear view)





*from left to right (front view)*

#### Cabinet of Curiosities

(Madame A. – Dream of the Bone Collector),

(Madame A. – Goldfish Nipping At My Tongue, Feeding On My Blood),

(Madame A. – Dinner with Cézanne),

2011, cabinet with hammered leaves, vitrines and objects, 182 x 65 x 35.5 cm each





(rear view)













Cessation of Birds' Song (Dusk)  
2011, mixed media, dimensions variable









Madame A. (DVD cover)

2011, mixed media, 13.5 x 15.5 cm, edition of 26, each edition has a unique cover



# Madame A.

2011, film, 27mins, edition of 26, each with its unique cover



## DRAFT FOR SCREENPLAY

### *a young girl speaking*

It was fun playing in that old broken house. It was scary too. Someone said this old woman haunted the garden. She was looking for her daughter. Her daughter had been stolen and carried away by big birds. They flew her to another country. To an island far away.

It was scary but we had to go there. It was a dare: "Dare you go inside the house! Are you too scared? Scaredy cat! I dare you climb the big tree with spiky leaves!" It was exciting when we got there: climbing in the broken down house: playing with the strange things we found scattered in the undergrowth. It was exciting climbing the trees. The trees were not like the ones elsewhere on the island. My father said the old woman brought seeds from a country far away and planted them.

The biggest dare is to stay overnight. The boys are always daring each other to do it and last summer they said they had stayed overnight and seen ghosts. But I don't believe them. They are too scared to stay all night. Their mothers would go looking for them. There are no ghosts. My mother told me that. There are no ghosts.

Two years ago underneath a bush behind the house I found a glass case with a dried lizard in it. I took it home. My grandmother said once there were many things like that in the old house. A museum she called it. The house had been a museum... a museum made by that strange old woman from another place that the grandmothers tell stories of.

I still go there with my friends and play but there is nothing left in the house now. Someone came this summer and took away the last things. Even the animal skulls that were piled up in one of the rooms that we were all scared to go near, they have gone.

### *an old woman speaking*

As a child I saw her. Yes. My mother worked for her and I would come and sit in the kitchen. Madame would come in and stare at me. I was scared at first: her eyes were so cold and green. But one day she smiled at me and gave me some chocolates.

Some people in the village did not approve. Madame never went to church. But she always gave money to the priest for the poor. She was not a bad person but she would not go to church.

When I was old enough I too worked for her. That was after the war. The Japanese had looted the place and vandalised much else. She was trying to remake it all. She would work all day cataloguing the skulls and bones and wooden statues she had found in her travels. Yes, and she still travelled to the other islands and to Kalimantan too. Even in her Eighties - yes - I believe she was that old. She told me, "Susanna, I will be eighty five next year." But she disappeared. She went travelling and never came back. I do not know where she went: she never told us where she was going to. She went away and she never came back. We





looked after her house for years but eventually she was declared dead. Someone bought the property but they never came. No one cared for it and the wind and the rain, the insects and the animals all took their toll

I went last week for one last time to look and try and remember. They will knock the house down, what is left of it, and build a hotel. Standing there in what was once her garden but which is now an overgrown tangle... it made me remember Madame staring on her veranda, a glass of wine in her hand, looking out to sea after the sun had set. She often stood there like that at that moment... motionless. I would often wonder what she was thinking of. Was she dreaming of the country far away where she had come from? Or all those islands she had been to, searching for strange animals and things? Or was she just enjoying the clean air and the moonlight?



Oh yes, I would see Madame in those early evening hours: she would put away her work - all the bones and the notebooks and Miguel would get her a chilled wine and she would sit alone on the veranda staring at the moon and at the moon reflecting on the sea. We never knew what she was dreaming of or remembering. She was not talkative when it was dark. She would just beckon me and say "Susanna get my supper: I want

fried pork and cheese and more wine". She would barely even notice me when I brought the food. No. At night she went into another world.

She loved passionately but she loved in vain. That is what I believe. "Susanna" she would tell me, "you are young. Can you imagine that I too once loved and was loved?" and she would show me photographs of men. Old photographs, already fading, of men in old fashioned clothes. "I loved them and they loved me too, but only as a mistress. No-one wanted to share my life. I have had to share my life with this instead." and she would gesture at her house and her garden. "I have had a museum instead of a husband."

At night when she sat there or stood on the veranda or walked the grounds she would talk to herself very quietly and sometimes she was silent. Or perhaps we didn't hear her because she spoke in a foreign language that we did not know. When she was distracted she would speak very, very quietly... almost in a whisper. The priest said she spoke in French but I do not know if it was that which she spoke. Someone once said she knew the language she spoke to herself when she went for a walk and talked to herself. They said it was Vietnamese she spoke. But I don't know. It was not my business, nor theirs. She needed to speak but not to be heard: I respect Madame's desire for privacy.

#### *a painter speaking*

It had only been a painting. Only a painting but it had ruined her life. It had at the time seemed only a gesture, albeit a magnificent gesture: to have a portrait made in her new black dress with the plunging neck and the gold shoulder straps. When the artist had suggested she let one of the shoulder straps fall and reveal her shoulder in full and to adjust her dress to show more cleavage she had thought nothing of it. Without the strap, the full expanse of her white skin flowed from head through shoulder to arm to hand - "so like a swan's neck!" someone had remarked at the vernissage.

She realised something was wrong when her supposed friends came to see it and walked away without speaking to her, whispering hand over mouth to each other and staring at her. The reviews were published quickly, unanimous in their disapproval: "scandalous, improper, lewd." How was she to know that society needed an epitome of impropriety periodically and that a picture of a woman exposing so very much of her breasts and her entire shoulder would suffice.



Rumours spread, gossips chattered. It was true she was no paragon of matrimonial purity, but in that society who was? Her husband ceased to talk to her. Her lovers ceased to visit. She no longer received invitations to the balls and soirees that had been her life.

It was not pleasant to be a leper: she would have to leave. Perhaps for a year or two. She made an appointment with her husband to discuss the situation. It was clear he wished her gone: he did not want a divorce yet: there had been sufficient scandal already. He was a rich man: she would have a generous allowance so long as she went elsewhere and did not return. Her family had estates in the colonies - in Indochina, near Saigon. She would go there, she decided. The thought of travel and adventure was now foremost in her head. She packed quickly and unmethodically: dresses, books, prints, jewellery, objets d'art, carpets. Ephemera too: train tickets, playbills, old newspapers, old postage stamps. She purloined some favourite objects of her husband - he had already left for the Riviera with no more than a cursory farewell - his best shoes, his top hat, his portrait of the Empress. The last thing she packed, on a whim, was the collection of bird's eggs she had made as a child. In all eight large trunks accompanied her to Marseilles and the boat to the tropics.



She did not know at that time that she would never return.

It was a new world. She was intoxicated by the heat, the shapes of the leaves on the trees that surrounded the house, the sounds of monkeys and birds in the jungle beyond. She began to gather them and place them in rows to see the profusion of things: feathers, leaves, skulls of small animals. She settled in to her new life, overseeing the plantation, dinners and picnics with other settlers, making collections. But this new world was still France: soon the rumours of her dissolute life style, her scandalous past filtered through. Even this backwater received newspapers, albeit months late.

She had to leave, but she had become addicted to the tropics: if only she could escape the French she could find a new home. She spent some time at Singapore, she had learnt English as a child so this was no hardship. She continued to collect haphazardly - preserved lizards and fish, stuffed birds from Europe, mounted on twigs and frozen in glass cases. But again one day she found herself ostracised: rumour was slow but inexorable. No one would sit near her in church.

She moved to Batavia but much the same happened. Now she realised she would never again be a member of "polite society". She bought an estate in an island in the Philippines, in Candelaria, Quezon Province. There she devoted herself to reading novels, filling a diary, talking to her servants and collecting. She made no attempt to meet anyone in society. She never once went to Manila. The local carpenter made cases for the collections she made: of animal skulls, taxidermied birds, lizards preserved in formaldehyde, pressed leaves. It was, she told the servants, a museum.

She made things too: painting images of the birds she collected, but for want of canvas she painted on tin trays and bowls. In the night time, huddled by the gaslight, she embroidered the same images. Whether this was meant as art or as a catalogue for what she collected is now unknown. For me, I think she was an artist. This is how I always imagine her: at night doing embroidery or else staring out of the window at the moon.



She died, it is assumed, sometime after the war - a time of confusion when no records were kept. No one really knew who she was or where she came from. The servants looked after the museum, dusting the cases, spraying against the encroachments of ants and insects. They had no idea what else to do. The house slowly fell apart, the servants left, children from the neighbouring village stole the dresses and jewellery and objets d'art for their games, walking to school barefoot in all the finery of the Parisian fin de siecle. The wind and the rain swept through the house. Mould and other vegetation sprouted everywhere.

Whether there had been some scheme or plan to her collecting, some deep and thoughtful typology became impossible to tell. The catalogue she had made was nowhere to be found. Her diaries too were lost, perhaps used by villagers to light fires. At the end had she become senile? Strange objects were to be found under bizarrely shaped vitrines. The priest visited the deserted, half ruined house and sensed evil. He told his congregation to go there no longer and the house and the museum it protected so inadequately were left alone.

Sixty five years after the war and fifty five after her disappearance when the estate was re-bought and the new owner found the wreck of her museum there was little left. It was impossible for him to discern what this woman from Paris had been trying to do. Perhaps she had been trying to hold back time itself - preserving everything she could put hands on? Or perhaps she had been making her own world to replace the one she had been exiled from? Whatever, when I, an artist who as a child had heard rumours of this house lost in the jungle, of those dresses worn for masquerade by older children, offered to take those few remaining remnants of the museum away, he acquiesced easily. Last year a curator from a foreign museum came to see me, to look at what I had. He was going to visit the house before it was pulled down. The owner had found a box full of old papers he was going to show him. I told him all I knew. I told him all that I imagined or dreamed. For me this was the true story but I do not know if he believed me. He took notes but said nothing.

She speaks to me from beyond the grave. I look at all these things she collected or made and put together and I can sense her personality. I know her like I know an old friend.

#### *a curator speaking*

To date it has been impossible to reconstruct her history.

The painter I met with and who owns the residue of the collection tells a story of how she had caused a scandal in Parisian society by being painted in a suggestive pose and that as a result she had had to retire from society. Much like the woman Virginie Gautreau who John Singer Sargent painted in 1884. I can find no evidence for this. Perhaps the painter has some letters or journals she would not show us. Or maybe it is all a fantasy. All we know for certain is that she was in Paris and in London in the closing years of the Nineteenth century. The few photographs remaining of her are from that period and show her as a great beauty in fashionable dress. She left Europe well before the first world war and never, it seems, returned. I do believe it's possible some scandal or some private tragedy made her do so.

There were always rumours that she had had a child - a daughter by some unknown lover - but that the child had been abducted. Perhaps, said those people who thought her insane, that is why she became insane, with grief. Perhaps they said that was why she made all those expeditions into the jungles of Mindanao and Kalimantan: she was looking for her daughter. Of course she never came back with her daughter, only with piles of feathers and bark and pressed leaves and animal skulls.





I do not know at what point she started to collect the objects made by the people of the islands. There were, I am told, tall wooden figures that she placed in the clearing behind her house. They were perhaps ladder posts from Sumatra or burial posts from Kalimantan: we do not know exactly what. The jungle and the termites have long since reclaimed them. One villager told me of having gone to borrow money from Madame A. and found her in that clearing singing and hanging animal skulls



from those posts. The villager fled and would never go back. But she said many years later when asked, "I was so scared and yet the image has stayed in my mind as an image of great beauty. She was a beautiful woman even though she was quite old then and she had a good voice, clear and strong. She wore nothing and moved from post to post as in a ceremonial dance hanging the skulls one by one. I think she was singing to the skulls. Perhaps she was calming the spirits of whatever once lived in those bones."

But no-one else tells that story: they tell rather of how she arranged the skulls in rows in glass cases. She would tell them what animals the skulls belonged to, what species, what genus. She handled the skulls as she talked in a gentle manner, many said.

As a professional curator, this conflation of ethnology and natural history makes me very uncomfortable. It seems to me at times not so much a museum as an anti-museum: a place where categories and typologies are not clearly defined but wilfully confused. But yet....

Another rumour was that some spirit had taken the daughter far away to another island. There is an extremely strange story I have heard that a child appeared in an island far away in Korea at this time who looked very much like her. But I cannot find any proof of this.

The villagers who remember her say she spoke to herself or occasionally to them in a foreign language. Sometimes they recognised this as French, but another language she spoke when she was distracted no-one recognised. I think it may have been Vietnamese. She never let herself be photographed in later life but there is an early photograph of her, much faded, that perhaps shows her as having Chinese eyes. Was she half Vietnamese or Cambodian? Nobody knows now.

Another villager, an old woman in neighbouring village that I spoke to, said she also heard Madame speaking to herself as she walked but she had recognised the language as being from one from Northern Luzon, Ilakano. "She had not hidden in the Philippines," this old woman said, "she had come home. She had come home but found that no-one she knew was left. Wherever she went she was a stranger with only the moon to talk to." Again I cannot ascertain the veracity of this statement.

### *the young girl again*

Look! In the garden, just as the sun is setting. It is an old woman walking across the grass. Dressed all in black!

### *the old woman again*

It is Madame again! She returns in the moonlight. She is as elegant and beautiful as ever! So dignified! So dignified! Look at her pausing at the table where Miguel has set her evening glass of wine. Madame! Madame! Can I get you some biscuits? Can I get you some of those Italian biscuits you like so much to dip in the chilled wine? No answer. She does not answer. She is turning away from me, sitting down, sipping her wine. But wait! She is standing up again making some gesture of welcome as though others are joining her. Who could they be? Who are these people walking out of the shadows towards her?





*the artist again*

Her memory is filling the garden with all those she loved. Like suitors to Penelope they come. And she will consider whether to dance with them or not.

*the curator again*

Some villagers say they have seen her ghost walking in the early hours of the evening. I went and sat in the overgrown wreckage of that garden more than once at that time, but I saw nothing.

Only the moon reflecting on the water. Only the occasional bat or night bird flying above. Only the rustling of the leaves in the cool evening breeze.

My time on the small island where she lived and made her museum and where her museum disappeared through the trespasses of ants and monkeys and children and the painter and finally from myself the curator, has come to an end. I have not found out what I wanted to find out: I do not know where she came from or where she went. I do not truly know why she made her museum. But one thing I have learnt: a museum is not about a building or a catalogue, it is about a state of mind: we bring things together so that we can dream with them. We put them in order so that we may allay our fears at what they may represent. We put them, next to one another so that they may talk to each other... to talk in some obscure poetic language that perhaps we may too overhear and partly understand.

I stand one more time in the wreckage of her garden and I look out at the moon and the moon reflecting on the water and I understand something about her: her compulsion to make things. Her need to preserve things, and her need to just stop and look and listen.

SCRIPTED BY TONY GODFREY

*\*film as completed and its subtitles differs in some respects from this draft.*

FILM CREDITS

A Geraldine Javier Production  
Edited and Directed by Jet Leyco  
Written by Tony Godfrey  
Translated and Produced by Raymond Lee  
Executive Producer: Geraldine Javier

CAST

Rhea Medina as The Girl  
Felipe Ronnie Martinez as The Old Woman  
Tony Godfrey as The Curator  
Angelina Kanapi as The Artist

Production Manager: Ianne Oandasan  
Cinematography: Gym Lumbea  
Soundman: Louie Aguilar  
Art Director: Harold Buaron  
Assistant Editor: Nica Santiago





Memoirs of Madame A.  
2011, mixed media on paper, 15 x 13 cm each ( x 20 pcs)









Cessation of Birds' Song (Eclipse)  
2011, mixed media, dimensions variable



*from left to right*

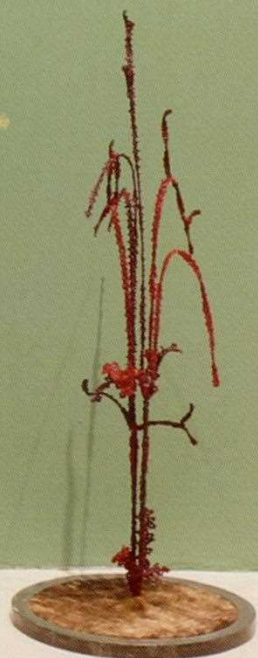
**Blood Homage To**

Pacita Abad, Louise Bourgeois, Lee Krasner, Agnes Martin, Käthe Kollwitz, Georgia O'Keeffe

2011, mixed media, dimensions variable (each)











*detail*



*detail*

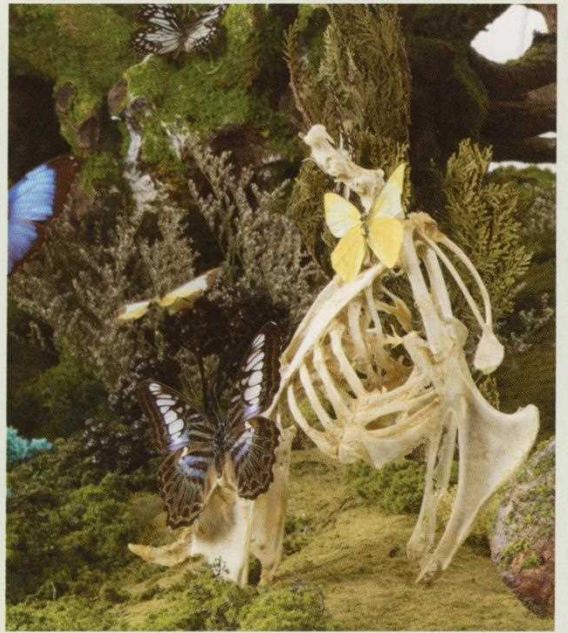
Frog Chase  
2011,  
mixed media,  
102 x 291 x 70 cm









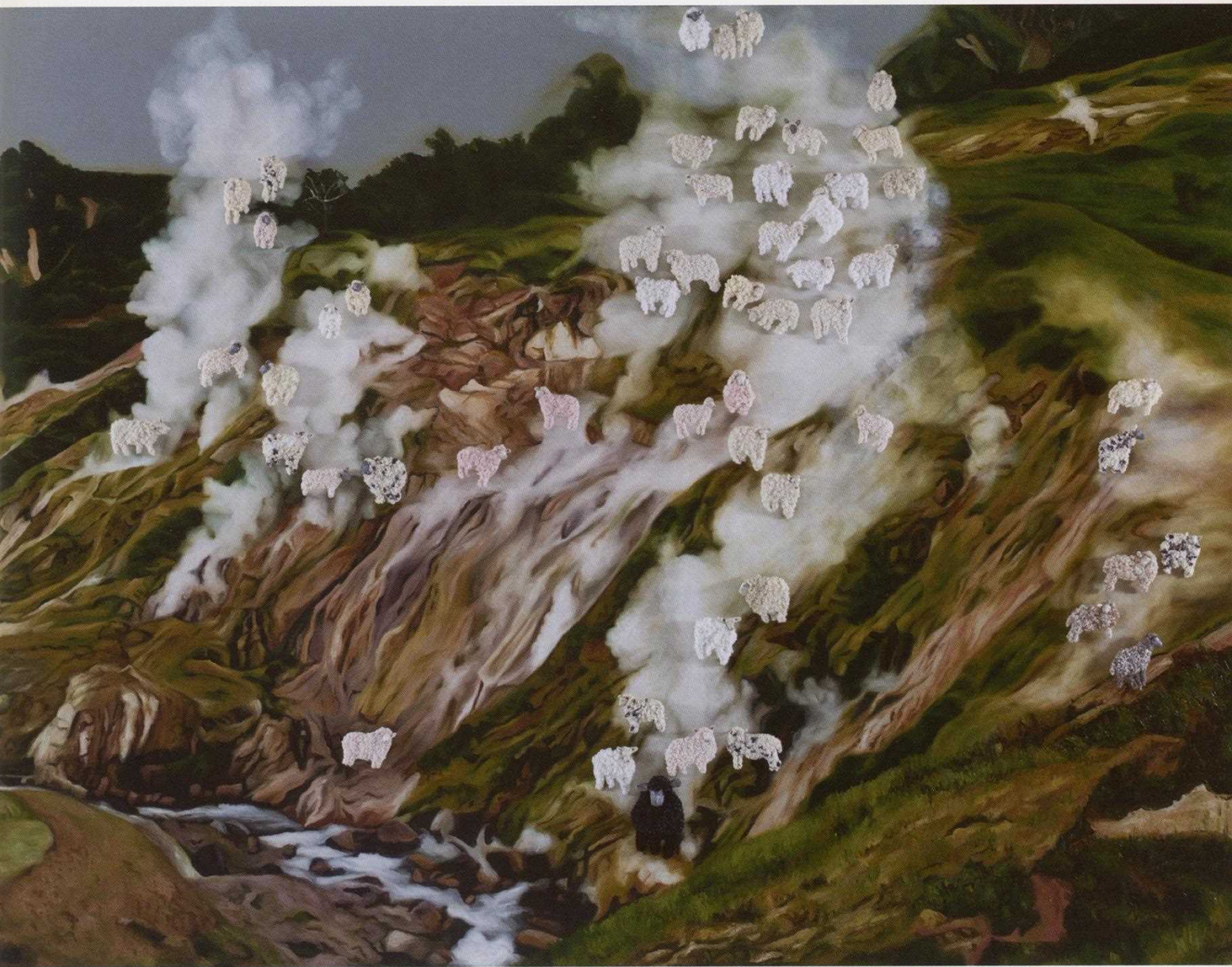


*detail*

Reasons To Be Cheerful  
2011, mixed media, 161 x 161 x 120 cm





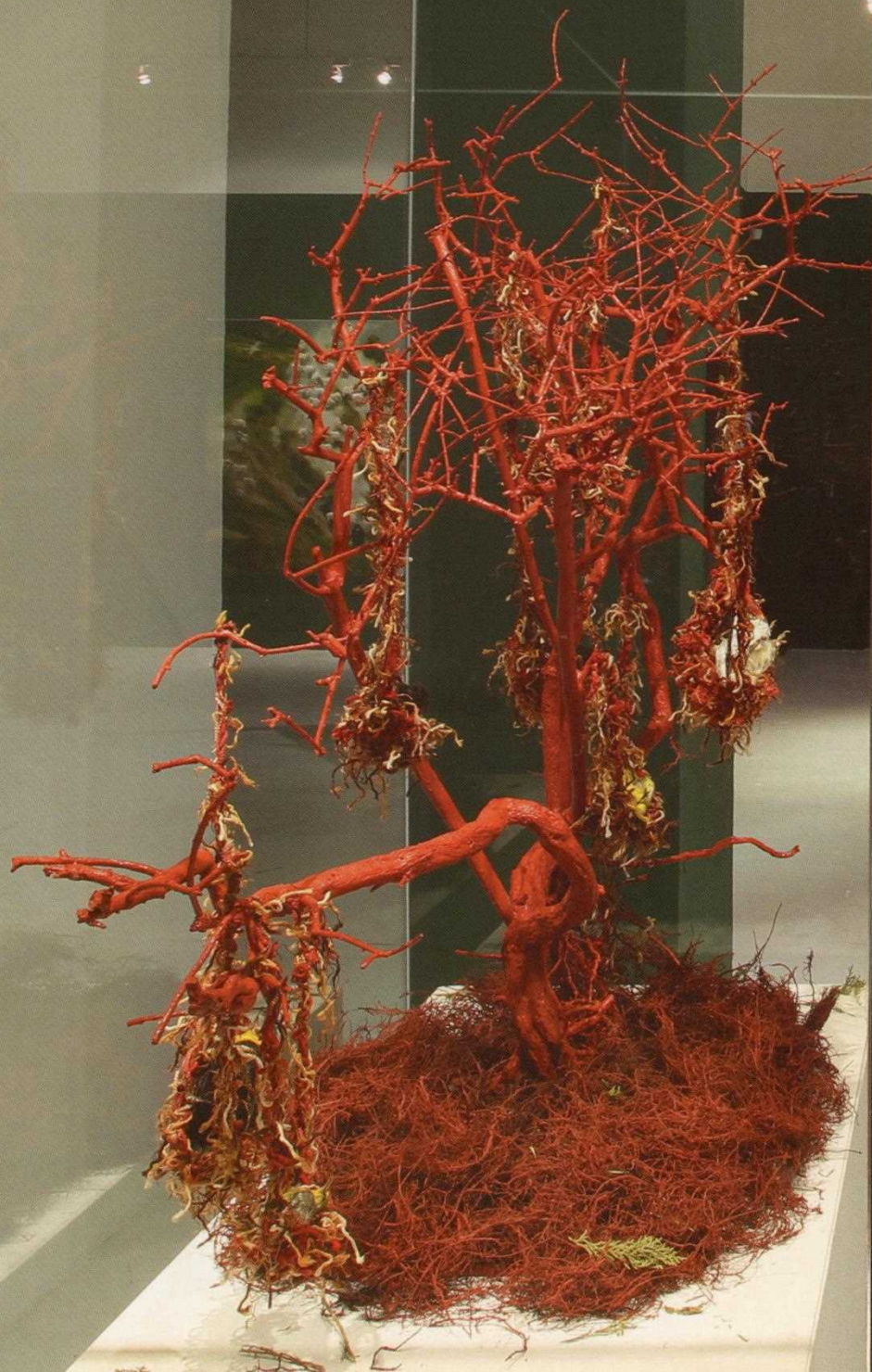


Hallelujah!  
 2011, mixed media on canvas, 178 x 240 cm



*detail*











# Geraldine Javier

b. 1970, Manila, Philippines

## EDUCATION

- 1997 Bachelor of Fine Arts Major in Painting, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Philippines  
1991 Bachelor of Science in Nursing, University of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines

## SOLO SHOWS

- 2011 *Museum of Many Things*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Singapore  
*In the Beginning...*, Arario Gallery, Seoul, Korea  
*Always Wild, Still Wild*, Finale Artfile, Pasong Tamo, Makati City, Philippines  
2009 *Butterfly's Tongue*, West Gallery, West Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines  
2008 *Sampaloc Cave Paintings*, Finale Art Gallery, 2F The Podium, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Living Images, Leaden Lives*, West Gallery, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
2007 *Most Beautiful Memories are Those of Childhood*, Finale Art Gallery, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
2006 *HAHA HUUH*, West Gallery, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Plaster Saints*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
2005 *Veiled Hostility*, West Gallery, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Weighing of Light*, Finale Gallery, Lao Center, Makati, Philippines  
*Sea Whores*, Theo Gallery, Guijo St., Makati, Philippines  
2004 *There is no there there*, West Gallery, Glorietta 4, Ayala Center, Philippines  
*Slipping*, Finale Art Gallery, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
2003 *Freezing the Flight Hummingbirds* West Gallery, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
2002 *Red On Her Skirt*, West Gallery, Glorietta, Makati City, Philippines  
2001 *Dividing the House*, West Gallery, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Very Scurry Furry Tales*, Surrounded by Water Gallery, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
1996 *Hospital Diary of an XN (Discovery Series)*, Hiraya Gallery, Manila, Philippines

## TWO-MAN EXHIBITION

- 2008 *Green Comes Out of Blue but is Richer than Blue*, Two-Man show with At Maculangan, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

## SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

- 2011 *Artists with Arario*, Arario Gallery, Cheongdam-dong, Seoul, Korea  
*ASIA Looking South*, ARNDT Gallery, Berlin, Germany  
*ART HK (Hong Kong International Art Fair)*, Arario Gallery, Hong Kong  
*STRIP Painters as Photographers*, Silverlens Gallery, Makati City, Philippines  
*Pulse New York 2011*, Silverlens Gallery, New York, USA  
2010 *Beacons of Archipelago*, Arario Gallery, Cheonan and Seoul, Korea  
*Pulse Miami 2010*, Silverlens Gallery, Florida, USA  
2009-10 *Thrice Upon A Time: A Century of Story in the Art of the Philippines*, Singapore Art Museum, Singapore  
2009 *Prague Biennale 2009*, Prague, Czech Republic  
*In the Ocean Without a Boat or a Paddle*, Blanc Gallery, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Post-Tsunami Art*, Primo Marella Gallery, Milan, Italy  
2007 *Dog Show 07*, Green Papaya Project, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
*I Have Nothing to Paint and I'm Painting It*, MO Gallery, Fort Bonifacio, Philippines  
*Headlights 2007*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
2006 *Girls Will Not Be Girls*, Art Center, SM Mega Mall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Deep Stretch*, Magnet Gallery, ABS CBN Compound, Quezon City, Philippines  
*The Way We Get By*, West Gallery, West Avenue, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Signed and Dated – Our 10th Anniversary Show*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
2005 *Parallel Stories*, Art Center, SM Mega Mall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Picturing Painting*, Vargas Museum, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
2004 *Closed for Inventory*, Cubicle Art Gallery, Pasig City, Philippines  
*Ateneo Art Awards*, Ateneo Art Gallery, Ateneo de Manila, Philippines  
*The Sedimentation of the Mind is a Jumbled Museum*, Jorge B. Vargas Museum, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Cancelled Metaphors*, Center, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Portraits*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



- 2003 *Silent Declarations*, Valentine Willie Fine Art, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
*Cut/New Collage*, Magnet, Quezon City, Philippines  
*CCP 13 Artist*, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines  
*Dogshow*, UFO, San Juan Metro Manila, Philippines  
*Alay VI*, Boston Gallery, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Picture This*, Art Center, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Letras Y Figuras: Contemporary Idioms on Idea & Identity*, Ayala Museum, Makati City, Philippines
- 2002 *Lighting Incident*, Photography Art Center, Makati City, Philippines  
*Multiple Portables*, Plastique Kinetic Worms, Singapore  
*Feast of Conversations*, Atelier Frank & Lee, Singapore  
*Recent Works*, Kulay Diwa Gallery, Parañaque City, Philippines  
*Conversation*, Art Center, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Reflecting Skin*, Pinto Art Gallery, Antipolo City, Philippines  
*Mainstream*, Surrounded by Water Gallery, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines
- 2001 *Portable Landscape*, Lunà Gallery, Cebu City, Philippines  
*Cool Pieties*, Art Center, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Surrounded*, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Main Gallery, Manila, Philippines  
*Grand Royale*, Big Sky Mind, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Who Owns Womens' Bodies*, traveling show organized by Creative Collective in cooperation with Ford Foundation Cultural Center of the Philippines, The Art Center of Academic Studies, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
- 2000 *Alay IV*, Boston Gallery, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Dogshow III* Surrounded by Water Gallery, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Posporo* Green Papaya, Quezon City, Philippines  
*True Confessions: Words, Thoughts, Acts*, Art Center, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Kalendaryo*, Jorge B. Vargas Museum, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Faith + The City*, traveling show organized by Valentine Willie Fine Art
- (2002) Metropolitan Museum, Philippines  
(2001) Art Center of Academic Resources, Chulalongkorn University, Thailand  
National Art Gallery, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
(2000) ABN AMRO, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
La Salle-SIA, Singapore  
*Tales of the Baglady*, Surrounded by Water Gallery, Mandaluyong City, Philippines
- Larawan ng Artista Bilang Pilipino*, Jorge B. Vargas Museum, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Sungduan*, traveling show organized by NCCA  
(2000) Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines  
1999 *Daily Planet*, Surrounded by Water Gallery, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*MMY*, Museo ng Maynila, Manila, Philippines  
*Alay III*, Boston Gallery, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Cracks and Abysses*, Art Center, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Dogshow II*, Surrounded by Water Gallery, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Today Show*, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines  
*Topology of Signs*, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines  
*Coordinates*, Boston Gallery, Cubao, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Kitschy Kitschy Co.*, Surrounded by Water Gallery, Agnono, Rizal, Philippines  
1998 *XPrints*, Jorge B. Vargas Museum, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Re-prints*, Australia Centre, Makati City, Philippines  
*Views from Elsewhere*, Art Center, SM Megamall, Mandaluyong City, Philippines  
*Cross Roads (Terminal Baggage)*, Australia Centre, Makati City, Philippines  
1997 *Wittgenstein's Duck Rabbit*, West Gallery, West Ave., Quezon City, Philippines  
*Drive by Shooting Fernando Amorsolo*, Bldg., U.P. Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
1996 *New Territory*, Faculty Center, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Picture Show*, Dominador Castaneda Hall, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
*Delatang Pinoy: Yes! The Filipino Can*, Hiraya Gallery, Manila, Philippines  
*Brain School for Babies*, Faculty Center, U.P. Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
1995 *Painting by Numbers*, Cultural Center of the Philippines, Manila, Philippines
- A W A R D S  
2004 Recipient, Ateneo Art Awards, Philippines  
2003 Thirteen Artists Awardee, Cultural Center of the Philippines









geraldine javier: museum of many things  
curated by tony godfrey

5 - 26 november 2011

vwfa

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gallery opening hours  
tue – sat 11am to 7pm | sun 11am to 3pm  
closed on mondays and public holidays.



Embassy of the Philippines



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