

Biography



Maia Cruz Palileo is a multi-disciplinary, Brooklyn-based artist. Migration and the permeable concept of home are constant themes in her paintings, installations, sculptures, and drawings. Influenced by the oral history of her family's arrival in United States from the Philippines, as well as the history between the two countries, Maia infuses these narratives using both memory and imagination. When stories and memories are subjected to time and constant retelling, the narratives become questionable, bordering the line between fact and fiction, while remaining cloaked in the convincingly familiar.

Maia is a recipient of the Jerome Foundation Travel and Study Program Grant, Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant, NYFA Painting Fellowship, Joan Mitchell Foundation MFA Award and the Astraea Visual Arts Fund Award. She received an MFA in sculpture from Brooklyn College, City University of New York and BA in Studio Art at Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts. Maia has participated in residencies at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine, Lower East Side Print Shop, New York, Millay Colony, New York and the Joan Mitchell Center, New Orleans.

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Artist Statement

Suspended in a state of unresolved mystery, my paintings reveal the quiet culture of family histories and the shadows they cast on the present. Lush tropical landscapes of the Philippines appear bright green and turquoise while muted orange and brown describe kitschy 1970s interiors and expansive skies of the American Midwest. Empty chairs are stand-ins for missing people recently departed or anticipated to return. Details are imprecise and distorted, allowing for a loose narrative that traverses familiarity, distance, inclusion, exclusion, and erasure. Evoking a hybrid sense of place, they serve as metaphors for migration and assimilation.

Photographs and videos of places where my family has lived are resources for my paintings, specifically Manila, Philippines, and Chicago, Illinois. As a child of immigrants who moved to America in search of a better life, I adopted a hyphenated concept of home. Their oral histories painted a carefully constructed picture of the people and country they left behind. Words were added as embellishment and others intentionally left out. While loss of language between generations often led to isolation, misinterpretation and confusion, it simultaneously opened pathways for imagination and improvisation. As such, the tradition of passing down oral history is one of improvisation, relying on memory and imagination to fill in the gaps. The more these stories were repeated, the more questionable they became. These paintings blur fact and fiction, offering a futile attempt to decode what is left unsaid.

My painting process mirrors this method of storytelling by editing and censoring visual information. They are reconstructions based on a mixture of photographic references and retrospection. Made up of layers of thin oil paint, some areas accumulate, creating thick, palpable textures, representing parts constantly retold. Other areas remain thin and transparent, reflecting information withheld, bringing to light aspects of history that remain silent, lost in the transference of migration and passing of generations.