

Being there, while being here

Jermaine Alhambra

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Abstract

10 taon sa Republika ng Pilipinas, 10 tau i Aotearoa.

Being brought up *there* in the Philippines, then migrating to an unfamiliar land, *here* in Aotearoa.

Being there while being here is a visual arts project that is situated in the interdisciplinary contexts of childhood expectation and reality of material thinking through a personal bi-cultural sensibility. This research is interested in the serious playfulness of fragments that combine to create a whole, within which are narratives of memory, care, and closeness. Material processes, in conjunction with sculptural making and installation, focus on navigating and reconnecting past experiences from the Philippines with my life here in Aotearoa. Correlating each body of work to a personal story/experience/memory, this project intends to manifest diasporic relationships through its engagement with materials. This is explored by investigating the materiality and immateriality of everyday materials, manufactured or raw, to be used or be reused; thus nurturing the materials' ability to physically and metaphorically retain and communicate memory.

Contents

BEING THERE, WHILE BEING HERE	1
Abstract.....	2
Contents	3
Attestation of Authorship	4
List of Figures	5
Acknowledgements	7
Preface	8
Introduction.....	9
 CORRESPONDENCE: THE NOUN	 11
Material, Things, Objects, Possessions	12
Noticing Photographs.....	14
Private-Public Meanings.....	17
Presence in space and time, presence to the present.....	20
The geographical spaces of site and home.....	20
 CORRESPOND: THE ADJECTIVE.....	 22
Objects materials as the 'sensorial markers'	23
Storytelling	26
Tailoring.....	27
Care, Waiting, and Mending	32
 CORRESPONDING: THE VERB.....	 33
panyo/kumot, March 2021	34
Untitled, April 2021	37
Table, Seat, Shelves, August 2021.....	40
Couch	42
Lampin Wall	43
Lighting and shade.....	44
Window frame with stories on fabric	45
 FUTURE CORRESPONDENCE: A REFLECTION	 46
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 68

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the Acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Jermaine Alhambra
August 10, 2022

List of Figures

Figure 1. <i>Album Annotation 3: Cabinet Display</i> , 2021.	15
Figure 2. <i>Album Annotation 1: My Crib and bedding set</i> , 2021.	16
Figure 3. <i>Album Annotation no. 2: Nanay Luming in the duster dress holding me</i> , 2021.	16
Figure 4. Lee Mingwei, <i>Fabric of Memory</i> , 2020 / Favourite Jacket. Image from Berliner Festspiele.	18
Figure 5. My folded panyo that initially belonged to Lola Pining, 2021.	19
Figure 6. My baby photo in our bedroom against the veneer wall.	23
Figure 7. Jermaine Alhambra, yarn swatches, 2021.	24
Figure 8. Jermaine Alhambra, first cotton knit sample 2021	24
Figure 9. Jermaine Alhambra, second sample, merino knit 2021	24
Figure 10. Corresponding colour palette, 2021.	25
Figure 11. Jermaine Alhambra, digital drawing, 2021.	27
Figure 12. Jermaine Alhambra, screenshot of my post on Instagram wearing my Dad's old work pants, 2019.	28
Figure 13. Jermaine Alhambra, Dad wearing his old work pants on a business trip in 2007, 2019.	29
Figure 14. Jermaine Alhambra, a scan of Dad's pants, 2021.	31
Figure 15. Jermaine Alhambra, my Lola's unfolded panyo, 2021.	34
Figure 16. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>panyo/kumot</i> , March 2021, an upscaled(x4) photocopy of grandma's handkerchief with the folds on cotton. Image by Sam Harnett.	36
Figure 17. Detail. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>panyo/kumot</i> , March 2021, Jermaine Alhambra. Image by Sam Hartnett.	37
Figure 18. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>Untitled</i> , May 2021, porcelain slip with <i>evil</i> eye glass beads moulded on wet builder sand left to dry.	38
Figure 19. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>Untitled</i> , May 2021, close up of bone-dry porcelain slip with <i>evil</i> eye glass bead casted on builder sand before firing.	39
Figure 20. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>table, seat, chair</i> , August 2021.	41
Figure 21. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>table, seat, chair</i> , August 2021.	42
Figure 22. Lola Pining hugging me in wearing her duster dress. 2004	46
Figure 23. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>Duster shelves</i> , September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.	47
Figure 24. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>Lampin walls</i> installed as a hallway and doubles as the lampshade for <i>Lighting</i> , September 2022.	48
Figure 25. Detail. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>Lampin walls</i> installed as a hallway and doubles as the lampshade for <i>Lighting</i> , September 2022.	49
Figure 26. Jermaine Alhambra, <i>Being there, while being here</i> installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.	50

- Figure 27. Jermaine Alhambra, *Being there, while being here* installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr. 51
- Figure 28. Jermaine Alhambra, *Couch*, September 2022. 52
- Figure 29. Jermaine Alhambra, *Being there, while being here* installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr. 53
- Figure 30. Jermaine Alhambra, *Embroidery table and seat*, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr. 54
- Figure 31. Detail. Jermaine Alhambra, *Embroidery table* with *Untitled 2021* weighing on top, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr. 55
- Figure 32. Jermaine Alhambra, *Lampin wall*, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr. 56
- Figure 33. Jermaine Alhambra, *Being there, while being here* installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr. 57
- Figure 34. Jermaine Alhambra, *Being there, while being here* installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr. 58
- Figure 35. Jermaine Alhambra, *Patterned stacks*, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr. 59
- Figure 36. *Album Annotation no. 3: In our bedroom*, 2021. 61
- Figure 37. *Album Annotation no. 4: My Happy 9th Month celebration*, 2021 61
- Figure 38. *Album Annotation no. 5: me holding a children's Bible*, 2021. 62
- Figure 39. *Album Annotation no. 6: I was obsessed with Hello Kitty*, 2021 62
- Figure 40. *Album Annotation no. 7: Nanay Luming in the duster dress holding me*, 2021. 63
- Figure 41. *Album Annotation no. 8: My baby brother pulling my hair in La Union*, 2021. 63
- Figure 42. *Album Annotation no. 9: My little red cardigan in Baguio City*, 2021. 64
- Figure 43. *Album Annotation no. 10: mattresses to forts*, 2021. 64
- Figure 44. *Album Annotation no. 11: tricycle*, 2021. 65
- Figure 45. *Album Annotation no. 12: My dad cleaning the car in the rain*, 2021. 65
- Figure 46. *Album Annotation no. 13: I love red hearts*, 2021. 66
- Figure 47. *Album Annotation no. 19: Who's Birthday, is it?* 2021. 66

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Preface

The complexity of my relationship with my family is a sensitive concept in my project. There are times when I feel both encouraged and then discouraged to continue to include the topic of my familial relationships. Sometimes, I long for the days of my childhood in the Philippines where my understanding of relationships was simpler and when my younger self thought that our home, 168 F Legaspi Street was my whole world. Along with my name and my parent's name, my home address was one of the first few words I could remember at the time I learned how to read and write.

During this project, my struggles with academic writing and writing-in-general have been amplified to the degree where I felt frozen and made no progress. My Dad loves to share stories. He once shared with me his struggle with writing at school when he was young. In particular, he talked about a writing assignment titled *My Vacation/ Bakasyon* and how they would be tasked with bringing back a piece of writing for their English and Tagalog classes from their summer vacation. To his amusement, he revealed that he would use the letter that he sent to Papang,¹ who was an OFW² at the time, as the 'Vacation/ Bakasyon' writing. My Dad's Story led me to remember my struggles with writing my own version of *My Vacation/ Bakasyon*. When he shared that story, I realised that I too used to dread the same writing exercises when I was younger. In describing his experience, Dad has inspired me to take the same approach of using a 'personal letter' in an academic context as a way to frame this project, especially throughout this exegesis.

The personal histories about my childhood that are shared within the project need to be done so in a way that is recognised as my knowledge, my story.

¹ His Dad, my grandfather

² Overseas Filipino Worker

Introduction

I was born in the Philippines in 1999. My parents raised me in my first ten years in Lola Pining's house, my childhood home in Pasig.³ Apart from my Mom and Dad, many women helped take care of me when they were away from home; they were my Lolas,⁴ my Titas,⁵ and my Yayas.⁶ The house in the Philippines is where my Lola still lives. It is still standing. I am in Aotearoa and no longer physically in the Philippines, however, my relationship with the family who have lived and still live in that house continues, along with everything it holds. I have memories from my homeland that I will forever have with me.

My sculptural and material sensibility and concerns are drawn and projected from my understanding and perceptions of remembered childhood experiences. I have come to observe objects and things in the project through the eyes of Baby Jermaine – in the presence of my childhood home as a nurturing environment.⁷ This material sensibility is an ongoing conceptual interest in my sculptural practice. For example, in previous artworks, I have explored the *duster dress* as a pivotal object from my childhood worn by my grandmother in her daily life.

This sensorial experience extends beyond the physical environment of my childhood home. I can describe this as experiencing a story/experience/memory through sensory recollections grounded in a particular object. Sensory imprints return when we actively re-encounter the thing and are then reminded of the story/experience/memory, almost like an afterimage of life. When I refer to *story/experience/memory*, I am alluding to each nuanced definition in the combination of my experience, my memory, and my Story. Through my creative practice, reproducing significant objects pertain to sensorial experience, I open up my cognitive knowledge of material culture.

Approximation of aesthetics is one of the strategies and methods I use to create my objects. In the Legaspi St house, I remember the pattern on pattern in every corner of our sala,⁸ specifically the wood grain wall and the layers of floral on floral. also remember the floral prints on the carpets, upuan,⁹ pillowcases, lamesa,¹⁰ and kurtina.¹¹ These patterns and my recollection of them are also akin to an afterimage,

³ 'Pasig' is a city in Metro Manila, Philippines

⁴ Grandmother

⁵ Aunt

⁶ House-helper

⁷ Baby Jermaine is my alter self: discerning memories as my child self. This is used as a method and a concept with my sculptural making.

⁸ living room

⁹ seat

¹⁰ table

¹¹ curtain

in that I carry these patterns along with the memories and experiences of my childhood.

I am interested in exploring material sensibility through the idea of 'sensory imprints' via a temporal frame. For me, my childhood home was a temporal site. In 2009, my family and I immigrated to a new home in Aotearoa. My Dad was the first to migrate; then, together, my mother, sister, brother, and I soon followed. As an immigrant, my cultural understanding of materials, objects, and things is oftentimes different from perceptions of the same objects here in Aotearoa. Understanding that there were differences and how and why it was different was not always instant to me. From the garments we use and wear, to the tools we use, for example, a 'tabo'.¹² These differences were mainly geographical and cultural concerns relating to me and my family's everyday rituals.

My practice based-research consists of reimagining objects and materials common across cultures, however, with different uses—particularly those used for their function and associated connotations. The aim is to create tensions between the original object and the created material form with its own set of complex readings and understandings that contribute to it as a new object. Acknowledging this as a strategy, I intend to create complex structures as a fluid expression across different disciplines, as an expanded field of sculpture, textiles, and ceramics.

This exegesis has been organised into three main parts that are discussed through different modes of correspondence.¹³ Although the concept of correspondence has emerged over the duration of the project as a key concept and methodology, the various meanings of correspondence: the adjective, the verb, the noun, and how they play out in the project are nuanced depending on the different contexts of their usage. I navigate stories, experiences, and memories through material interventions. I am using the notion of 'correspondence' as an overarching methodology; my practice explores various translations and layering of correspondences.

There is a symbiotic relationship that comes from the cyclical processes of the project concept, contexts, content, and my artmaking. These processes are interconnected, and this set of relations creates a matrix of connectivity and links. Hence, the three parts and modalities of correspondence. This project's personal, cultural, psychological, and diasporic contextual relationships utilise materials from my immediate environment. In the same way that I deal with these materials, I layer my relationships with my culture into the process of making.

¹² tabo (there is no direct word translation in English) – it is a traditional all-purpose tool in a household in the Philippines used for cleaning, bathing and basic hygiene. It is a essentially a small bucket/pitcher used for water mainly.

¹³ Correspond, correspondence, corresponding: "the situation where things match similarity (between things) in character, quality, quantity, origin, structure, function; it is the extended written communication; to exchange messages, information; a connection between two things". See — <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/correspondence>.

Correspondence: the noun

*"Home will always be home no matter how far away from it we are, emotionally and physically."*¹⁴

Correspondence: the noun, meaning the correspondence (between A and B).¹⁵ Through objects such as photographs, cabinets, and garments, I ask, can the sensorial aspects of the memories they carry be heightened and potentially give the feeling of *being there while being here*? I use Marsha L. Richin's definition of *private* meaning and *public* meaning of possessions to understand and articulate the value of those objects. In this section, I will focus on my childhood home as a temporal site. I will then discuss how the temporal register of my childhood home's presence has both changed and not changed since moving to Aotearoa (and living here for the past decade) as a way to recognise the underlying distance created since.

¹⁴ Enas Sistani, "Too Western for the East, too Eastern for the West", <https://sekkamag.com/2019/04/30/photo-story-too-western-for-the-middle-east-and-too-middle-eastern-for-the-west/>.

¹⁵ See – <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/correspondence>

Material, Things, Objects, Possessions

To define material culture in the context of a home, I am interested in the rituals that objects have taken part in and formed. Through Professor of Management Practice in Organisational Behaviour, Ian Woodward's book, *Understanding Material Culture*, I understand that material culture looks into the relationships that people form with physical items over time, not only for its sole purpose but also as it expands beyond its physical means and into a cognitive state. My current bedroom displays many material things that I collect, both conventional and unconventional, such as clothes, make-up, photographs, and paper bags.¹⁶ To example the nuanced meaning between 'things' and 'objects', Woodward explains that 'material culture' associates with different modes of 'material'. These are the definitions that I comply with in terms of how I think about and between 'things' and 'objects'. He states:

There are, however, some important nuances in the meaning of each term, which help to demarcate the context in which it should be used. 'Things' have a concrete and real material existence, but the word 'thing' suggests an inanimate or inert quality, requiring that actors bring things to life through imagination or physical activity. 'Objects' are discrete components of material culture that are perceptible by touch or sight...¹⁷

All of these items, 'things' or 'objects' that I have collected and listed above, I can categorise how I would use them for their physical purpose but also beyond their sole function. For example, there are clothes I just keep to wear at home and clothes that I wear out in public, but there are also clothes that I keep not to be worn but instead are kept for their 'sentimental value'¹⁸. As I put my clothes into these categories, I am interested in the boundaries and criteria of how I value each garment that I own in my collection. This nuanced definition between 'things' and 'objects' gives me insight into the process of why these combinations of words – 'story/experience/memory' – that I locate together within this exegesis, make sense for the project. Throughout my writing, I will be using the linguistic slash symbol '/', used in written text as a replacement for the word 'or'; I will conceptually utilise the '/' in the text as a method of linking different words as they are 'intra-acting' through nuances.¹⁹ Each word influences and adds to the other's meanings. It is a useful tactic for weaving links of ideas (a metaphor for a thread in text), whether it is an exchange of synonym/ antonym/ hypernym/ hyponym relationship. I allude to each of the words, 'story,' 'experience,' and 'memory' in their nuanced definitions within my project. My

¹⁶ I even have collections of my used surgical masks, used make-up cotton pads, and cosmetic packaging.

¹⁷ Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (Los Angeles ; London: Sage Publication, 2007), p15.

¹⁸ Marsha L. Richins, *Valuing Things: The Public and Private Meanings of Possessions*, *Journal of Consumer Research* 21, no. 3 (1994): 504–21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2489689>.

¹⁹ Whitney Stark, Intra- action, "Intra-action is a Baradian term used to replace 'interaction' which necessitate pre-established bodies that then participate in action with each other..."
<https://newmaterialism.eu/almanac/i/intra-action.html>.

‘experience’ is the phenomenon that has happened to me; my ‘memory’ is what I recall from that experience; my ‘story’ is what I share from that memory.

Often what brings this process from my cognitive realm into a physical one is through the sensorial experience, how I experience the object. “Imagination and sensations of aesthetics depend on former experience and learning (cf. Morphy 2007; Meyer forthcoming).”²⁰ Sometimes it doesn’t need to be the exact object; instead, we can respond to the original thingness of what makes that object the thing we remember. In Korean artist Do Ho Suh’s fabric sculpture *Home Within Home Within Home Within Home Within Home Within Home* (2013), he uses textiles to create a one to one scale replica of his childhood home in Korea, and his first apartment when he moved to the United States. The thingness of the original objects (his two homes) that Do Ho Suh corresponds to is the one to one scale qualities of each house. He recreates a stitched copy of his two homes using traditional Korean sewing techniques. Creating this nuanced fabric object corresponding to his experience, Suh says about his *Within Home* series, “It’s my personal journey from Korea to the U.S. and the story of the houses that came along with me, or brought me here.”²¹ Within my project to distinguish the objects I make from the *original object* that I am inspired by, I will call the work/objects based on my experience ‘nu-object’, which references the combination of words ‘nuanced object.’²²

I acknowledge that the objects I use or discuss in this project are tied to a particular social class in the Philippines. Moreso, my family’s socioeconomic class was the main factor in immigrating in order to have a better quality of life. Although I say this, Marsha L. Richins states, “consumers own objects for the value they provide.” In my project, materials pertain to its value in use instead of economic value.²³

²⁰ Øivind Fuglerud, et al., eds. *Objects and Imagination : Perspectives on Materialization and Meaning*, New (York, NY: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2015), 105.

²¹ Lehmann Maupin Gallery’s, *Do Ho Suh - Home Within Home*, <https://www.lehmannmaupin.com/exhibitions/do-ho-suh6/press-release>.

²² Nu-object’ also references the combination of the words ‘new object,’ which both have the same syllable pronunciation when spoken.

²³ Richins, Marsha L. “Valuing Things: The Public and Private Meanings of Possessions.” *Journal of Consumer Research* 21, no. 3 (1994): 504. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2489689>.

Noticing Photographs

+

To: Baby Jermaine Alhambra

You are INVITED to remember, look at, observe, notice, care for, make with, create with, explore, feel, and share these photos.

From: Jermaine Alhambra

+

For this project, I have been collecting photographs from albums, which are mostly images of my childhood and my origin home in the Philippines. These photographs disclose important moments of intimacy with members of my family and repeated interactions with familial objects.

In the early months of my project, I was continuously inspired and influenced by those photographs. Eventually, this collection developed into a series of annotations titled, *Album Annotations*. Photographs of my childhood have been an essential material to this project because, except for a few clothing pieces, I have limited access to objects from my childhood as they are predominantly still in the Philippines. As a mode of correspondence within the project, this collection of photographs has brought many ideas and information to work with through the acts of noticing. They have been a significant element throughout the project, a group of photos I have constantly returned to and looked at to be inspired for concepts, ideas, and themes. The collection of *Album Annotations* is a curated selection of images. These photographs helped me locate the environment, the site, the aesthetics, the cultural space, and the objects that surrounded me in my childhood. For these annotations, instead of annotating my relationship with the person in the photo, I look at the objects in the surroundings. I go to the object in order to reflect ideas—for example, the idea of pattern on pattern in the images of my home.

I resonate with Australian artist Vivienne Binns' viewpoint about 'the family album'. She expresses, "when you look, you start to empathise, these things, these trivial things have these connections to the deepest foundations of our humanity."²⁴ Through the process of annotating my home collection of photos, I have found that the more time I spend with them, it has given me space for acts of re-encountering relationships, experiences, and objects. I am pulling my feelings and memories apart through the practical process of annotating photos; then putting them together in different ways, such as making *nu-objects* to make new connections. I see these annotations as correspondence between me and the photograph. It is a relationship of exchange. In this process, I ask myself, *How can I annotate the photos?* I notice that I

²⁴ Tate, Vivienne Binns, Youtube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKseNrg7zic&t=331s&ab_channel=Tate.

look at and describe the objects surrounding me in the image more than the person I am with at the time of the event or when the photograph was taken.

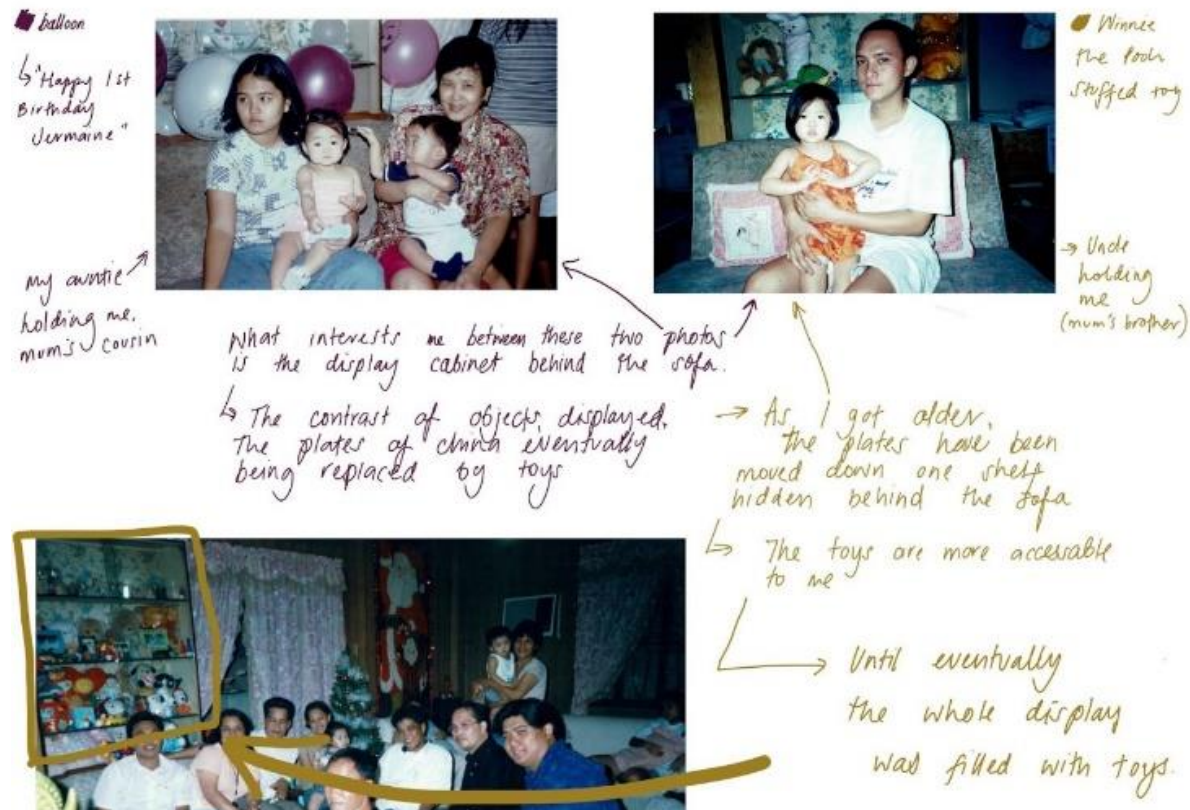


Figure 1. Album Annotation 3: Cabinet Display, 2021.

I took notice of the same display cabinet present in the three photographs of Album Annotation 3. As I grew older, the china plates that initially took up the entire cabinet were slowly replaced by my stuffed toys and my sibling's toys. I first took notice of the objects in the cabinets (top-left photo), they were filled with my grandmother's fine china. But then, in the right-hand photo, when I looked closer at the cabinet, the plates had been moved down one shelf. In the bottom photo, the cabinet eventually displayed toys on almost all of the shelves.



bedding set

I've confirmed with Mum, I was right.

the bunny is quilted onto the bedding

(I think they got me a bunny figure because I was born year of the rabbit) (1999 Chinese calendar)

I am the first-born so all of my items are new. On my Mum's mum side I am the first grandchild.

mosquito net
but to me it also looks like the food cover to prevent the flies touching food

floral pattern on net

Crib wood



Figure 2. Album Annotation 1: My Crib and bedding set, 2021.

blue flowers from the dress

red from duster dress
towel

mirror with frame and with the image of Jesus in the garden



"Narra Sala Set"

Sala = living room

Nanay Luming
Lola's sister

"Intimacy with the Small"

identical / matching chairs that I used to connect together to make a 'bed' / tunnel / fort / house

I used to be able to crawl under the chairs like a tunnel
I was also able to lie down completely straight when the two chairs were connected to each other. But as I grew taller / bigger

the chairs have two pannel-like-legs instead of four individual legs made from narra wood

the chair were like a playground structure / they are stable and sturdy chairs

these chairs are still in my Lola's house in the Philippines.

The narra tree is the official national Philippine tree

Figure 3. Album Annotation no. 2: Nanay Luming in the duster dress holding me, 2021.

Private-Public Meanings

As the *Album Annotations* have developed, I've been struck by a conundrum concerning the images' cultural aspect that I thought was apparent in these photos. *What clues tell someone these photographs were taken in the Philippines?* When in fact, the objects and scenes in these photos could potentially be found in many Western households. I could argue the history concerning the modern colonisation of the Philippines. However, as I pondered more on the aesthetic aspects of traditional and cultural and collected objects from my possessions, I started to correspond personal histories and meanings to objects, particularly the private and public meanings. The concepts of *private* (personal) meanings and *public* (social) meanings of objects as a form of correspondence are one of the modalities of correspondence I employ in my project. I first encountered Marsha L. Richins' concepts of private and public meanings of objects in Woodward's book, *Understanding Material Culture*.²⁵ He summarises Richins' research in the section, *Valuing Things: Private and Public Meaning of Possessions*. He states:

Public meanings relate to noting the meanings assigned by members of society at large. While there will be some variation and misinterpretation, by and large, members of a community can agree on the meaning of many objects as they are shaped by meanings around fashion, style, status, and stigma. Private meanings are what possession means for an individual. This might include some aspects of the owner's personal history especially related to significant kin relationships.²⁶

Often I question the importance of my personal history/experience in an art context. Whenever I share my works with the public, whether that public is my peers or strangers, I always find myself telling a personal story/experience/memory. A cultural experience is rooted in an individual's experience, hence the *personal* meaning. Reading further into Richins' research, she states, "The meanings of cultural symbols are shaped and reinforced in social interchanges, and individuals with similar enculturation experiences tend to have considerable similarity in the meanings they attach to these symbols"²⁷ There is a strong correlation with the *private* meaning to the objects (symbols) that become possessions (owners of the object). Therefore, anyone else from the *outside* (non-owners) who views my set of photographs may feel a sense of understanding of the images. Anyone can have a childhood photo with their grandmother holding them. Still, the meaning of these photos and images to me as the owner communicates a personal understanding that this is my experience, my memories. 'I' am in that photograph. When I notice my own private meanings of objects, I find my external environment influences me. When we break down the

²⁵ Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (Los Angeles ; London: Sage Publication, 2007), 148.

²⁶ Ibid., 148.

²⁷ Richins, Marsha L. "Valuing Things: The Public and Private Meanings of Possessions." *Journal of Consumer Research* 21, no. 3 (1994): 506. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2489689>.

meaning of public (as an adjective), it concerns “the people as a whole,” a collective of individuals.²⁸ There is an inevitable relationship between private and public meaning, as they correspond with each other.

Taiwanese-American artist Lee Mingwei also used a childhood photograph as the inspiration for his project, *Fabric of Memory*, 2020. In a photo, Lee wears an outfit his mother made for him, and she is holding his hand on his first day of kindergarten. *Fabric of Memory* invites participants to submit a significant piece of clothing, a garment made for them by another, and with that garment, present a corresponding story.²⁹ In Lee’s work, each participant’s garments were installed in gift boxes with their corresponding stories as gift tags. We can understand how the personal meaning of Lee’s photograph transcends his personal meaning when the public (not just the participants in *Fabric of Memory* but also the viewers) starts empathising with his personal experience and memory. Bringing forth their garments and stories created the public meaning (a collective of personal meaning and significance), originating from Lee’s photograph.



Figure 4. Lee Mingwei, *Fabric of Memory*, 2020 / Favourite Jacket. 30. Image from Berliner Festspiele.

²⁸ See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/public#other-words>

²⁹ Berliner Festspiele, *Lee Mingwei – Fabric of Memory (2006/2020)*, Accessed March 3, 2022, <https://www.berlinerfestspiele.de/en/gropiusbau/programm/2020/lee-mingwei/fabric-of-memory.html>.

³⁰ Ibid.

Applying these concepts to an existing object of my own, I selected my handkerchief (or panyo in Tagalog) that used to be my Lola's. The social connotations of a handkerchief led to personal use for sanitation, cleanliness, and collection of bodily fluids. My own private experience and relationship with this specific panyo of my Lola's goes beyond its public cultural and social connotations. My relationship with my Lola, as the previous owner, allowed me to respond to this object in a way that connects me to her by imprinting the familiar smell, pattern, and texture of the panyo in my mind/memory—evoking an emotional response to the familiar physical and sensorial qualities of the panyo as opposed to a newly store-bought handkerchief.



Figure 5. My folded panyo that initially belonged to Lola Pining, 2021.

The accompanying story for *Favourite Jacket* for Lee Mingwei, *Fabric of Memory*, 2020.

"This jacket and a few photos are the only items that have remained from my childhood. Since then they have accompanied me like fetishes on my path through the world as an artist. I was born in Siauliai, Lithuania in 1966, which was unwillingly part of the USSR then. Due to the economy of scarcity during my childhood and adolescence, a heavy grey dominates my memory. This jacket was my favourite jacket; there was no other. It had to last me from the age of two to five, preferably until I started school. That's why my mother lengthened the sleeves over and over again. When I moved to Germany as an artist after the fall of the Berlin Wall, I only had a few of my works of art in my luggage, as well as this jacket and a few photos to remind me where I'd come from. In the years that followed, from 1997 to 2010, this jacket accompanied me in my translocated and unsettled life as an artist, when I moved to Buenos Aires and Windhoek and back to Hamburg, before ending up in Berlin permanently in 2014. My art objects were sold or "disposed of" due to moving or were even burned in performances, but the jacket was always there as a fetishist fixed point in my life."

Presence in space and time, presence to the present

There is a saying that I frequently heard back when I was living in my home in the Philippines, “Mag-dahandahan ka sa _____, mas matanda pa sayo yan” which directly translates as, “Be careful with _____, that is way older than you.”

This phrase indicates to me that the value of the object is related to temporality. There is a list of things that I can remember from my childhood house that I could apply this saying to which speak to value, care and place. I often ask, *can we think of time passing as distance?* We are getting further away from yesterday than we are to tomorrow. I wonder, is that why we value our childhood because we can never go back to it? I can never go back to being a child or to my childhood. None of us can, but yet our relationships with the people and objects that inhabit time past continue.

Personal identity is related to our body which is finite. Our body not only limits us spatially, but it is the ultimate reminder of our limited time... In other words, our individuality, with its host of private experiences and unique features will unmistakably come to an end.³¹

Whenever I acquire a second-hand garment that I want to keep or wear, especially from my family members, I think about the history and the previous owner of the garment. I also love finding a photo of the original owner wearing the same garment. My imaginations as Baby Jermaine. This is concept and a strategy that I use in order to tap into my memories a child. In doing this, it makes think about myself as my body's scale relationship to objects. Remembering what it felt like when I grew up in the Philippines.

The geographical spaces of site and home

This project's title *Being there, while being here*, is taken from writer Stine Bruland's chapter, *Being there while being here, long distances aesthetics and sensations in Tamil national rituals*.³² As a migrant, I am interested in this chapter through the idea of being away from home. Bruland explores the diasporic group of Sri Lankan supporters of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to example how their yearly ritual of maveerar naal (Great Heroes' Day), is an important part of reflecting on the lives that have been lost in the Sri Lankan's civil war, and for healing and reconnecting to their homeland. The discussion focuses on how the LTTE supporters create sensorial affects through different materials, artifacts, objects, and aesthetics that are

³¹ Rupert Brown, and Dora Capozza, eds. *Social Identities: Motivational, Emotional and Cultural Influences*. (1. publ. Hove: Psychology Press, 2006), 76.

³² Øivind Fuglerud, et al., eds. *Objects and Imagination : Perspectives on Materialization and Meaning*, New (York, NY: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2015), 93.

cultural resemblances of their homeland. Bruland follows Selvi's story (2008) and experience as a migrant in Norway and how they prepare for the ritual. While the objects I explore do not reflect the scale of a world event, like a civil war, Bruland's writing about the Tamil national rituals gives insights into the way I think about objects that have cultural relevance and everyday use in my homeland, the Philippines. This group of LTTE supporters makes meaning through their diasporic relationship with imitations of the *maveerar* cemeteries in Sri Lanka. They reconstruct this site, constituting the central place of the ritual performance. Selvi and her family gather around fifty volunteers to help set up the hall.³³ For example, they would decorate the walls with banners and balloons of their national colours red and yellow but the object that struck me the most were imitations of the coffins and grave stones for the *maveenar illam*. The coffins were constructed from polystyrene, and they would paint them silvery grey, discerning the authenticity of their memory through the object.

An object familiar to me is a 'panyo'. It is a common object widely used by Filipinos (due to environmental reasons), as a sweat cloth and also to cover the nasal area from pollution and other bodily impacts. The panyo is mainly experienced through the senses of sight, touch, or smell. Through culture, people can adapt to their environment in non-genetic ways. In Aotearoa, where the weather, temperature, air pollution and geography are drastically different to the Philippines, and everyday life is also culturally different – handkerchiefs are not as commonly used. This contrasts with what I usually practiced in the Philippines, and as a result, I have adapted to not use my panyo here in Aotearoa.

Thus, this psychological phenomenon of re-creating what was once our present is a process of attaining one's knowledge of meaning. As Bruland iterates on Kapferer and Hobart's argument, "rational thinking, aesthetics, and its production of sense or feeling is central to our experiences and understandings of the world, and thus to our production of meaning."³⁴ Through the application of its use, emergent forms from quotidian materials/images become evident from our immediate environment. Bruland discusses the Tamil's method of recollecting stories, lived experiences, and memories using other materials, artifacts, objects, and aesthetics. "The distance to their homeland is gone and they are part of the Tamil nation."³⁵ They are *there*.

³³ Depending on the where and how many people, the scale of the *maveer naal* ritual will be different around the world.

³⁴ Øivind Fuglerud, et al., eds. *Objects and Imagination : Perspectives on Materialization and Meaning*, New York, NY: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, (2015), 104.

³⁵ Ibid., 106.

Correspond: the adjective

To correspond with somebody or correspond to something.³⁶

In this second section, *correspond: the adjective*, I will explore the temporal presence of the body (myself) as the correspondent. As the correspondent in this project, how do I make those connections? The *distance* of being away and growing up in a different land continues to persist in the agency of closeness. *Closeness* is a conceptual term and terrain that is used both as an adjective and a method in my artistic processes. I wonder, *How do these feelings and memories of closeness manifest a reflexive practice?* Is it through the methods of storytelling, care, mending, tailoring, fitting – actions that are used throughout the project? This section will also investigate how I can use quotidian materials and objects such as my Dad's pants (trousers) to navigate my childhood experiences in the Philippines as an agency in my artworks to articulate my making processes. I will correspond each discreet body of work (objects) to a personal story/experience/memory.

³⁶ See – <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/correspond?q=correspond>

Objects materials as the ‘sensorial markers’

In my first session at the Textile and Design Lab at AUT, I discussed with the textile technician my ideas of what I wanted to produce. One of them was patterned wood scarves referencing the veneer walls in my old home, and as always, I had shown her photos from my childhood for reference.

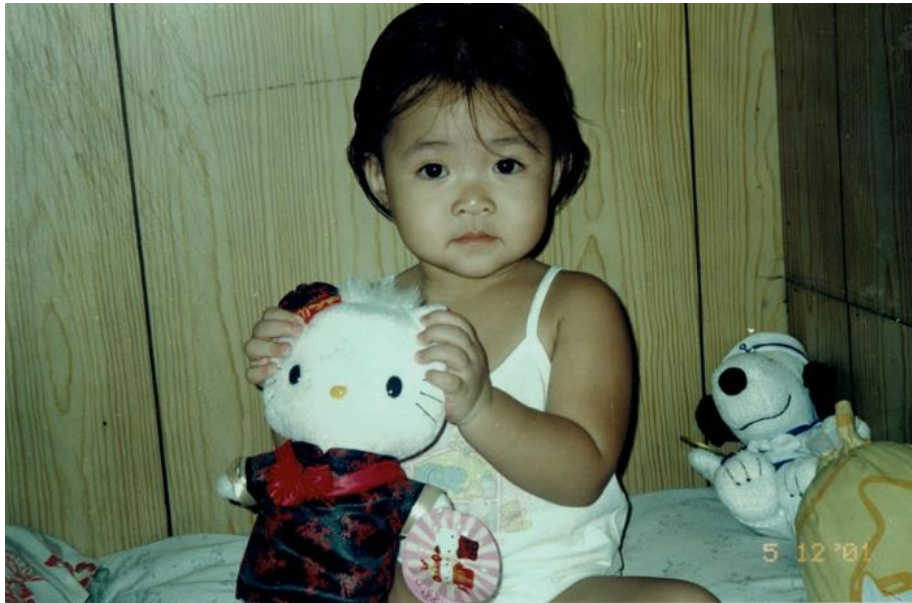


Figure 6. My baby photo in our bedroom against the veneer wall.

Then in the second session, she helped me produce samples/approximations of the scarves. We tested how my drawing of the wood pattern would transfer into a jacquard knit. I was trying to work out how to choose thread colours for the wood-patterned scarves' swatches. Our discussion about selecting and choosing the colour from the swatches was an exciting moment. I felt she recommended colour choices based on her memory of the photos because I didn't bring my reference photos from our previous meeting. In comparison, I was basing my colour choices on the combination of my memory and physical experience with the actual surface and object. This experience got me thinking about the process of memory translation.



Figure 7. Jermaine Alhambra, yarn swatches, 2021.



Figure 8. Jermaine Alhambra, first cotton knit sample 2021

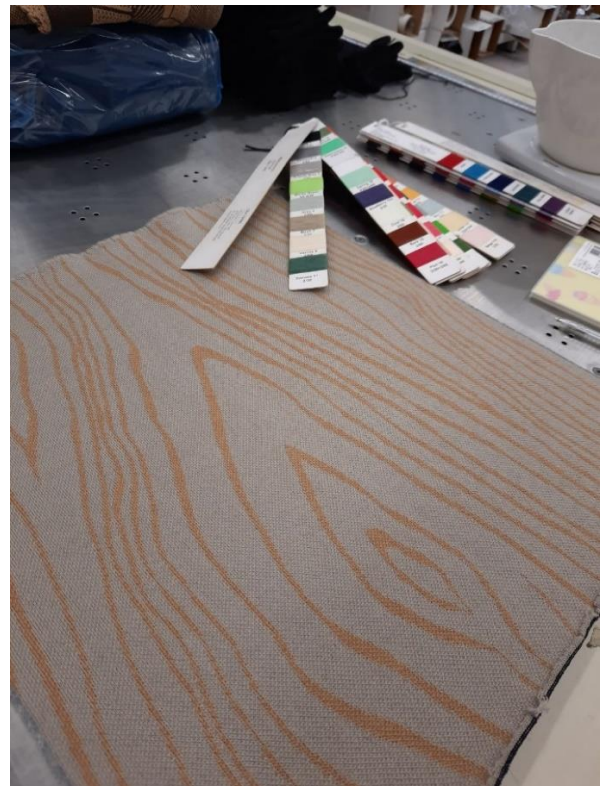


Figure 9. Jermaine Alhambra, second sample, merino knit 2021



Figure 10. Corresponding colour palette,³⁷ 2021.

³⁷ The colours of my notes correspond to the colours in the photo images in Album Annotations. I used a digital eyedropper tool.

Using materials from my immediate environment is greatly effective for this project. Materials and images from past experiences become powerful when framed through a story as the main character. They take on a role and perform as actors in a different cultural frame. Using this idea of a metaphorical approach to aesthetics can be seen in the work of Korean artist Meek Young Shin. She makes objects that replicate the aesthetics of ceramics, as seen in *Translation Vases* (1996-2012), where Shin used soap as a material to 'perform' like ceramic. The painted and carved soap sculptures are a facsimile of traditional Chinese vases, replicating every detail, including the glossy surface, the scale, and the flaws of the vase.

I am working with my amateur knowledge of craft (processes) and interacting with found materials and objects, and I will not be restricted to the knowledge I already know. This gives me the freedom to observe, wonder, and notice nuances and subtleness without hindrance. It is essential that I fuse traditional and non-traditional methods/processes of making within sculptural, textile, and ceramic paradigms to create layers and dualities, addressing the relationships between the story/experience/memories and the materials.

Storytelling

Pakikipagkwentuhan (storytelling) is part of traditional Filipino indigenous psychology and culture and is a way of sharing knowledge, and exchanging ideas, information, and thoughts. In my project, the objects I craft are the physical manifestation of imagined materiality inspired by my possessions and personal histories, materialising the personal meaning of my possessions. Bruland states, "As rational thinking, aesthetics, and its production of sense or feeling is central to our experiences and understandings of the world, and thus to our production of meaning."³⁸ By corresponding my private and public meanings to my original objects, I can eventually manipulate the original object within my cognitive realm and eventually materialise these imaginations. As Bruland suggests, "Instead, imagination is 'a creative exteriorizing force that is essential to the formation of being.'"³⁹ Through the processes of making and aesthetics, I aim to create intimacy as a kind of correspondence with my stories/experiences/memories, reaffirming the original objects' presence in a physical space and time, where "perception becomes shaped through the imagination".⁴⁰

³⁸ Øivind Fuglerud, et al., eds. *Objects and Imagination : Perspectives on Materialization and Meaning*, New (York, NY: Berghahn Books, Incorporated, 2015), 104.

³⁹ Ibid., 104.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 104



Figure 11. Jermaine Alhambra, digital drawing, 2021.

Tailoring

+

Made Exclusively for:

When I asked where he got his pants made, my Dad explained that these were provided by the company he used to work at; they were his work pants; I don't know what it is about this 'Made Exclusively for:' label that had caught my attention. Maybe, it was the way my Dad left it unsigned? Or was it left unsigned because the maker did not know who it was made for?

+



Figure 12. Jermaine Alhambra, screenshot of my post on Instagram wearing my Dad's old work pants, 2019.



Figure 13. Jermaine Alhambra, Dad wearing his old work pants on a business trip in 2007, 2019.

When I found this pair of pants, they were in great condition.⁴¹ No stains, good quality fabric, and the taupe colourway was just what I was looking for to fit my wardrobe. The best part was that the pants were materially fascinating. I found that the fabric of the pants was treated to be a crease-proof material. The pair would have

⁴¹ This pair of pants I found in 2019 when my family and I visited our family in the Philippines. Along with other clothing, I found my Dad's work pants that I now own and still wear.

probably still fit my Dad. He no longer wears them. He put them away because he no longer values the baggy fit, which is now an outdated style from the '90s. Currently, the style for men's business wear is tailored to the body and is fitted, and the baggy style of the '90s, now 20 years later, is deemed *poorly fitted*. I loved the pants so much that I tailored the waist to fit myself and added them to my wardrobe. As an object, these pants' public meaning depends on generational trends, outdated vs. trendy. Per the private meanings of the pants, despite the fashion and style, these pants that used to hold my Dad offer me a closeness to him that no other pair of pants can do. I've altered the pair of pants not once but twice to fit me at two weight stages in my life. As the body changes, so should the vessel that holds the body, but when we repair and mend, we hold the vessel in a reciprocal relationship of care.

Whenever I wear these pants, I can comfortably sit. However, I want to sit without worrying about how my body lies against the fabric of the pants. Any instant heat or pressure, for example, heat from my body or from a clothes iron, means that the creases do not stay for long. For instance, when I wear these pants on my bus ride from my suburban house to downtown, it takes 30-40 minutes. During the whole ride, while sitting, even though the heat and pressure from my body would press against the material and create creases, they disappear once I stand up from my seat. Therefore, I think this experience is about how I perform for the piece of clothing. Compared to my Dad's pants, my knit skirt restricts me from sitting the way I want; with my knit skirt, I would usually sit on the edge of my seat, trying my best not to bend my hips so that the shape of the skirt will remain taught.



Figure 14. Jermaine Alhambra, a scan of Dad's pants, 2021.

Care, Waiting, and Mending

To mend is to repair garments. We may fix holes, missing buttons, remove stains, and any sign that the garment has been well worn. Mending can consume a lot of time. Mending also requires problem-solving. Often, I will go through a process of waiting when I mend. I wait until I have the time and that the way I'm going to do it feels right. I try to collect the clothes in clusters so I can do them all simultaneously.

Recently my Dad had a pair of pants that he needed me to repair. I jokingly said that it would take me two weeks before I would get to mend his pants along with my little stack of clothes that I also needed to repair. Two weeks passed, and my Dad became upset because I still hadn't fixed his pants. I didn't realise he needed the pants urgently because they were his favourite work pants. Eventually, when I mended his pants, I felt like it wasn't just to repair the pants but also for our relationship.

There is concept of waiting throughout the project. I wait when I feel the moment is right. I wait until I feel my approach is making sense to me. I wait until I encounter the right material. I wait until I know how to make something. Sometimes I wait for mistakes to happen. Then I learn from making mistakes.

Corresponding: the verb

Corresponding: the verb is to be the same as or match something.

In this third section, I will discuss my making process by establishing a corresponding relationship with materials and objects, using my embodied knowledge and process-led practices as a method of making. As I write this exegesis, I have noticed that there is a process for everything, including the way I write.

Within my practice, I use storytelling, translation, scale, weight, and approximation as methods of correspondence concerning materials, objects, and aesthetics to attain closeness. This process is what manifests my *story-based nu-object*. To an extent, I am making to experience the process, and these processes reflect the correlating experience/memory/story of the object. Each work is listed through one, or more, of four key elements; a title describing the object, the *Original object*, the associated *Story*, and the *Materials* used. Following this, I enter into analysis and reflection of each work concerning my overarching interests throughout the exegesis. Some may not have a title yet, a story, or a reflection intended for future correspondence, e.g. one that I intend to make for exhibition.

panyo/kumot, March 2021

Original object: Panyo

Story: I remember, when I was no older than eight, in the Philippines my Lola (grandmother), my Mom and my Dad and even our house-helper always held a panyo (handkerchief). Ready to wipe our (my younger siblings and me) sweat, blood, tears and snot. At school, we were taught to always keep a panyo in our pockets. Whenever I unfolded a panyo, it would be so much bigger than me. To me, it was like a kumot (blanket). I remember, my Lola often brought me when she went to Church. Sometimes when we forgot to bring a hand-held fan, my Lola used her panyo instead. She would wave the panyo just like a fan to create a breeze. With this came her endearing scent, a mixture of the oils from her hands and her perfume. The smell was always comforting.

Materials: cotton, enlarged photocopy of the panyo, clothesline, water, fabric softener.

I have been interested in fabric's ability to hold memory, embodied in the phrase I call, "*Folding as a way of holding*". To me, these terms emphasise the action of folding as a memory marker for holding memory, metaphorically and physically. For example, a panyo's folded lines will reflect how the panyo sits in the pocket against the warmth of the body, whether it is folded four times or scrunched up. Those lines and creases created, indicates a temporal gesture, a moment in time.



Figure 15. Jermaine Alhambra, my Lola's unfolded panyo, 2021.

I am bringing in the accompanying Story as the concept, which is one of the most memorable and vivid memories I have of the panyo. For the concept of ‘folding as a way of holding’, I started with a panyo for its simple and planar shape and form but also for its rich cultural contexts. In our household, we typically fold a panyo four times; when it is unravelled, the folded lines mark out grid-like shapes on the panyo. I took this opportunity to play with scale. Just like the memory of unravelling a folded panyo as Baby Jermaine, even though the panyo didn’t get to cover my toes, the panyo felt like a kumot (blanket) to me. I have reimagined the panyo as an enlarged image of my Lola’s panyo. I decided to scale up the panyo four times so that when the art object, *Panyo/Kumot* is folded in half and half again, the size will be the same as my original panyo—creating an almost equivalent 1:1 scale replica of Baby Jermaine’s body to the panyo and my current body to the *Panyo/Kumot*.

My work *Panyo/Kumot* (handkerchief/blanket) creates tension through its associated private and public meanings. Installed, the *Panyo/Kumot* hangs wet in tension with the printed image of my Lola’s panyo on the kumot⁴², which has been scanned flat unfolded. So, even though the fabric is stretched and smoothed by the water, the printed image still ‘holds the folds.’ In this way, the panyo both physically and metaphorically holds memory. The printed image on this fabric is a scan of my panyo that initially belonged to my Lola. As the water and fabric softener holds down and smoothens the fabric, the digitally printed folds are forever embedded in the image of the fabric. The universal smell of the fabric softener indicates a clean, new washing ready to be used again but in contrast of the printed image of the folds that holds onto the memories of its use.

⁴² blanket

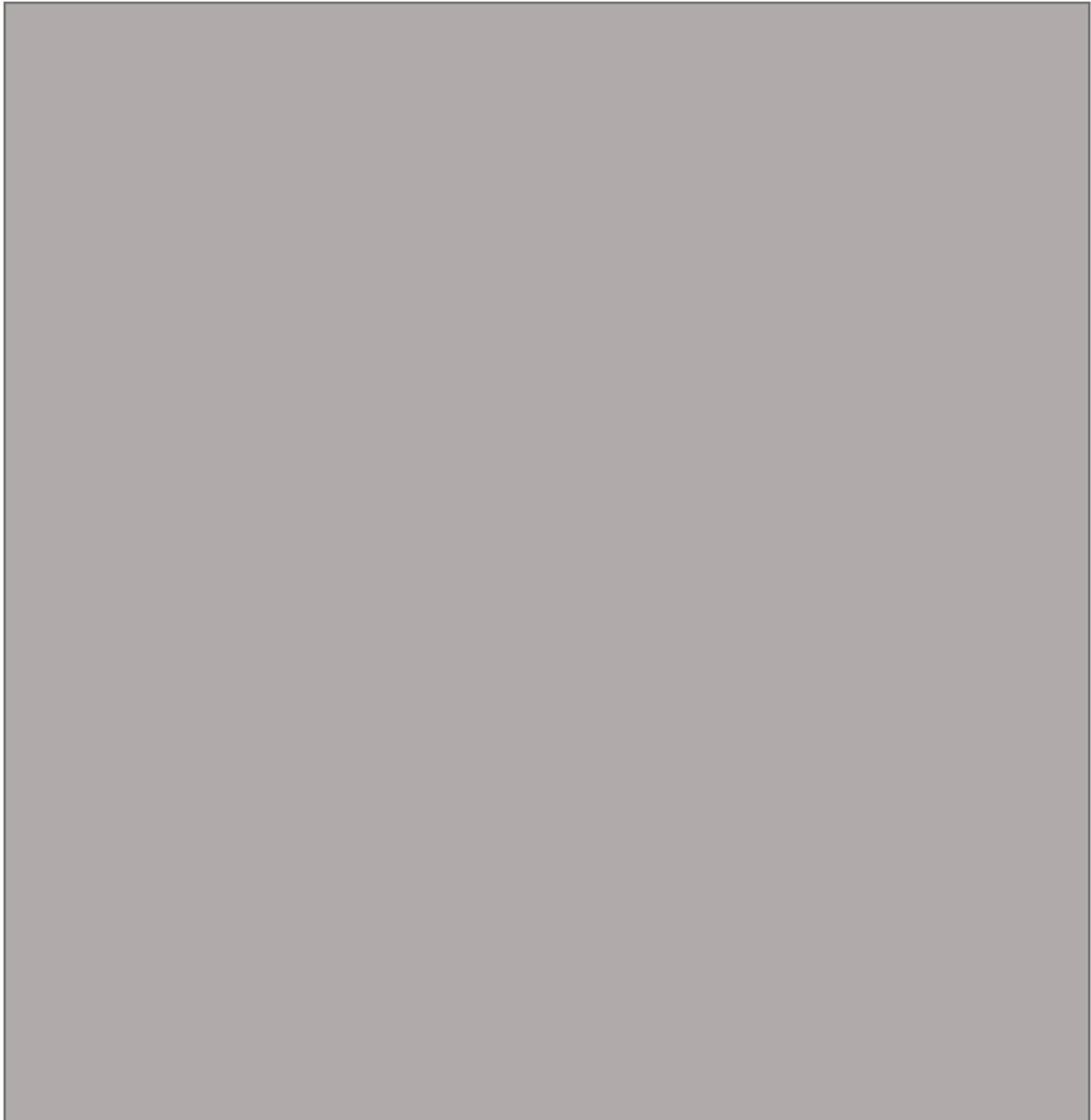


Figure 16. Jermaine Alhambra, *panyo/kumot*, March 2021, an upscaled(x4) photocopy of grandma's handkerchief with the folds on cotton. Image by Sam Hartnett.

To me, the essence of the owner of the panyo is intertwined in every thread of the fabric, whether it was my parents' or Lola's. In our household, for our panyo, we typically try to use/buy patterned fabrics that are distinctly our own. Sometimes they are also personalised by embroidering our initials. Apart from the distinct patterns of each panyo, the smell of the hand, the sweat, hand oil, or perfume adds another layer of essence whether it was my Dad's or Lola's. To me, the sweat, hand oil and perfume, is the fabric softener.



Figure 17. Detail. Jermaine Alhambra, *panyo/kumot*, March 2021, Jermaine Alhambra. Image by Sam Hartnett.

Untitled, April 2021

Original object: Shell/food plate

Story: I remember when I was younger, I was eating a meal prepared by my Dad. I remember my grandma was beside me making sure I ate my meal properly. At the time, the kitchen chairs were too low for me to sit comfortably and eat and so sometimes, I would sit on my knees or stand on the chair. Even if we were eating stew or a brothy meal with our rice we would still use plates rather than bowls. We would have a bowl for the stew as the shared serving bowl. At the time, I didn't quite understand/know what I was eating. I just knew it was seafood. I wasn't sure what it was, to me it looked like eyes and those eyes were watching me.

Materials: low fire porcelain clay, evil eye beads, builders' sand.

We have a cultural practice of eating with our hands. Eating with bare hands is not uncommon in the Philippines. This very tactile act allows me to experience food in an intimately physical way. In remembering the dish that was my plate, its colours have

blended so the rice and the shellfish are the same colour chroma, but the seafood and gingery taste and aroma, and touch are from my childhood.

I've placed sand on an MDF board in a shape of a standard porcelain plate. The sand is just wet enough to hold itself as the mould to cast my clay slip onto.



Figure 18. Jermaine Alhambra, *Untitled*, May 2021, porcelain slip with *evil* eye glass beads moulded on wet builder sand left to dry.



Figure 19. Jermaine Alhambra, *Untitled*, May 2021, close up of bone-dry porcelain slip with evil eye glass bead casted on builder sand before firing.

Table, Seat, Shelves, August 2021

Original object: Things in the living room on the window side, curtain, couch, pillowcases

Story: As a form of entertainment for five-year-old me, my Lola would gather the skirts of her dress between her knees and legs, creating an almost hammock. I remember enjoying sitting on it. But as I grew older, bigger, and her knees grew weaker, the dress eventually started to rip. There were many women that took care of me in my early childhood mostly my mother's relatives, her friends, cousins, titas, because mom, Dad, and my maternal grandma all had work at the time. One of my most memorable memories was of my Lola's and her sister's duster dresses. She was called "Nanay Luming".

Materials: Floral poplin, wood frames, duster dress, foldable seat frame, shelf frame.

Growing up in a matriarchal space in my Lola's house, floral patterns were everywhere and on almost anything. I term this, *pattern and pattern* or more specifically, *floral on floral*. The floral pattern or motif is all over my Lola's house, it is a constant image that reminds me of home and of the people who took care of me when I was younger. Not only was the floral on floral present in the curtains, the tablecloth, tapestry, and on bedsheets; it was also present in my Lola's duster dress.

Within this work, *table, seat, shelves* I have explored the items: tables, seats, and shelves as supporting structures in the home that are conventionally rigid in structure and form. I have been motivated to create these conventionally rigid structures to support objects or whatever they may carry in the same way that mimics how my grandmother used to carry me on her duster dress.

I have imagined and created my own table, seat, and shelves with a hammock-like surface similar to how my grandma would gather her skirts between her knees for me to be carried in. A table is a social site for gathering, mending relationships but also for doing and actions. For example, a kitchen table is a space for eating and gathering and a working table is for doing work. When I created this table I imagined the memory of my Lola sitting on the couch by the living room window, where the sunlight is most prominent—wearing her duster dress and mending clothes by hand. Sometimes if her duster dress did not have pockets she would put the things that she uses within the skirts of her duster dress. And when she used the sewing machine during the day, she would follow the sunlight, whether that would be on the kitchen table, the coffee table or the table by the laundry area.



Figure 20. Jermaine Alhambra, *table, seat, chair*, August 2021.



Figure 21. Jermaine Alhambra, *table, seat, chair*, August 2021.

This table that I made is an accumulation of all these concepts and domestic contexts. I made an embroidery table and my own craft process. In the process of making this embroidery table I have taken from a Philippine traditional process of embroidering pineapple fibre. The process of wrapping the two embroidery hoops with soft muslin creates a soft layer between the wooden frames and the pineapple fabric in order to protect the delicate pineapple fibres from the wooden frames, holding the fabric taut while embroidering. In making my table, the frame of the table is wrapped with floral fabric corresponding to the visual tones of Lola's duster dress. The fabrics that are used to wrap the table structure are like the fabrics that would be used to make a duster dress.

The shelves are also wooden frames that hold a piece of fabric sewn like a skirt, the wooden frames act like the legs that holds the shelf structure corresponding to my Lola's legs. And the frame of the seat is a foldable seat holding my own duster dress that I received from my Lola. The seat is too fragile to sit on as the duster dress because fabric is too thin to hold any adult weight.

Couch

Original object: Rattan couch

Story: My mother used to bathe me on the woven rattan couch. As I was a newborn, and her first child, she had yet to discover and experience how to take care of me, and bathing me on the rattan couch was her way.

Materials: wood frame, woven floral shower/tablecloth fabric⁴³

The rattan couch had an open mesh cane weave that allowed water to easily drain straight down the open weave. My mom would put my baby bathtub at the bottom to catch the water as she rinsed my body. After a while the rattan eventually broke down and the couch was replaced with another.⁴⁴ From then on all of our couches had floral tapestry.

In our living room we have two sets of sofas. One of our sofa sets that sits right next to the window has a velour tapestry and because of the dusty environment, we would often cover it with a duster cover. Therefore, sometimes the floral pattern of the tapestry on the couch is hidden.

⁴³ I could possibly use an existing couch in my house instead of making a new couch frame.

⁴⁴ I still do not know if only the tapestry was replaced or the whole couch

For this work, I'm interested to create this couch inspired by our kitchen table where there are layers and layers of protective surfaces. Starting from the top layer of the table in my Lola's kitchen is a glass surface, and in between the glass and the table were at least two fabric tablecloths. One that is lace (depending on the occasion the type of layers would change), and the other was a PVC plastic layer to cover the lace. We would also protect the glass with placemats.

I imagine a nu-couch that has a woven tapestry inspired by the woven rattan. The fabric that I want to use as the tapestry of the nu-couch is similar to the PVC tablecloth that we use on our kitchen table to protect the fabric underneath the wood of the tabletop. This material can be also read as a shower curtain. With this work, I am interested in the idea of protecting and taking care of these objects. Almost like mending in the memory of the rattan couch... *to be continued* ... (in progress making).

...I ended up using the set of outdoor couches that we own and use here in New Zealand. It's funny to me that although these couches are made for the outdoors, we bring the couches inside and to avoid winter and rainy weather from damaging them. It usually sits in our kitchen area against our sliding doors. I decided to use these couches because of the removable cushions and the sturdy steel frame.

The two layers of PVC cloth that were used were cut as the warp and the weft were still attached to the same fabric. Therefore, when I interlaced the two PVC cloths together, the weave held itself even when I placed this piece onto the couch as a cover (Fig. 28).

Lampin Wall

Original object: Wood grain veneer walls

Story: In almost every room of the house, the kitchen, the living room, and the bedrooms, all of them had the veneer wood grain pattern. The veneer walls were installed like vertical planks of wood, each panel continued from the top to the bottom like long scarves. The width of each panel would be irregular. There was no fixed pattern that signalled which width of the panel would come next, *or at least I tried to figure it out*... It was like the house was wrapped in this pattern.

Lampin is a fabric also known as baby gauze. Lampin is used commonly in the Philippines as a toddler's sweat cloth. I remember that we would always wear the lampin on our backs whenever we would do activities such as play, run around and even when we went to school. The lampin would sit between the skin of my back and my top like a protective wall. I would always remember the refreshing feeling when the lampin is removed after sweating on the fabric. Although it was refreshing to have the lampin removed, I hated it back then when they changed my lampin because it was fussy, it was too much work, and it would interfere with my playtime.

Materials: lampin, curtain track, wood varnish.

In this work, I am exploring a similar concept as the rattan *couch*, where I used the idea of the protective layers of our kitchen table in the Philippines—extending the idea that the lampin is a protective wall that sits in between my skin and my garment. I am printing on the lampin with a hand drawn woodgrain pattern inspired by/similar to the walls of our house in the Philippines. I am fabricating the lampin wall in the same way that the veneer walls were fabricated. I like the ironic idea of varnishing a wall made to look like wood which is essentially made with paint. To me, the idea of this is almost like a pun. I am manifesting this object using the lampin as the wall and printing on the woodgrain pattern with wood varnish; this operates as a temporal gesture and indicates time passing. I imagine that as time passes, the *protected* (varnished) areas of the cloth will remain, and the unprotected cotton will deteriorate... *to be continued* ... (in progress making).

...Thinking about the installation of this work. I decided to present the lampin wall on a curtain rack. I thought about the combination of functionality between a wall and a curtain. Both a wall and a curtain can divide a space or even create an interior and exterior side. Often, in my lola's home there will be curtains installed for the doorway. To avoid collision, the fabrics used for the door curtains were light fabrics, almost see-through. We usually can see just enough silhouette of another person coming towards from the other side.

When the *Being there, while being here* installation is first encountered. The two lampin walls installed parallel to each other (Fig 24.), mimics the hallway in my lola's house in the Philippines.⁴⁵

Lighting and shade

Original object: Pulley light, that was originally installed in the kitchen, now is used at the entrance stairs

Story: I forgot that this was a pulley light until a recent chat with my uncle. Back then, as baby Jermaine, when I was at the top of the stairs, the light looked like I could reach it. But as I would go down the stairs, the light slowly moved further away and higher up. The adults would place it just high enough so that my siblings and I couldn't reach it.

⁴⁵ 'hallway' – In my lola's house when we enter from the front door, the living room is the first room we encounter. This particular space that I call hallway is in between the two sets of sofas in the living room. This hallway actually has no walls to vertically divide the space instead it is divided by the two large carpets on the floor which are parallel to each other. The space between the carpet is the same width of the entrance door.

Materials: light bulb, lighting cord, cotton fabric strips, safety pin

I've always thought that the lamp shade was glass, but when I had a video call with my uncle, he explained that it was plastic. ... *to be continued* ... (in progress making).

...Using a suspended lighting cord, I wrapped the cord with fabric strips. The fabric spirals down the cord and secured by a safety pin. I used the same patterned fabric as the hem edge of the *lampin wall*. The lighting is installed in between the two parallel lampin walls. There is no lampshade directly attached to the lighting cord, instead the two lampin walls act as the lampshade. The height of the lightbulb is the same height when I fully raise my hands up, so that now I can reach the light.

Window frame with stories on fabric

Original object: Window frame in our old family bedroom, fleece blankets with our favourite cartoon, characters.

Story: The windows in our family room were glass with metal frames. Whenever we would have our afternoon nap, our cotton curtains were not thick enough to cover the light. So, sometimes, my parents would put up fleece blankets to cover the windows. Even though the room was not wholly blacked out, it was enough to create a dim environment and comfortable enough to sleep. As the room was not dim enough, we could always see the characters printed on the blanket light up against the sunlight of the window, almost like watching TV or a movie.

Materials: wood frames, stories or photos printed on fabric, hinges

The window frames will be made into embroidery frames. And each frame will hold a story... *to be continued* ... (in progress making).⁴⁶

⁴⁶ As I progressed to make work for my exhibition after the writing of my exegesis, I never made this work. I felt that I didn't need to write/embroider each 'story' of each work for my final exhibition. My thought process towards this work was just like how I chose not to exhibit the photos from my album annotations. I want the audience

Future correspondence: a reflection

Coming to an end, my process of making has also been present throughout my process of writing. We can think of actions such as care, mending and tailoring to attain closeness in relationships that distances such as time and temporal space are brought by. Even with distance, we will find a way to feelings of “being there”, just like how my collection of photographs and annotations reflect the traces of home.

Now, while I am here, I will explore and make an installation that mimics the maximalist space in the same way my home in *F Legaspi St.* has been decorated. For future correspondence, I am going to install the nu-objects that I have made in the gallery, in the temporal way that my Lola presents her things and objects in her home. To shorten the distance *while being here*, even just for a moment. A moment that we can carry through our memory for a lifetime.



Figure 22. Lola Pining hugging me in wearing her duster dress. 2004



Figure 23. Jermaine Alhambra, *duster shelves*, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.



Figure 24. Jermaine Alhambra, *lampin walls* installed as a hallway and doubles as the lampshade for *lighting*, September 2022.



Figure 25. Detail. Jermaine Alhambra, *lampin walls* installed as a hallway and doubles as the lampshade for Lighting, September 2022.



Figure 26. Jermaine Alhambra, *Being there, while being here* installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.



Figure 27. Jermaine Alhambra, *Being there, while being here* installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.

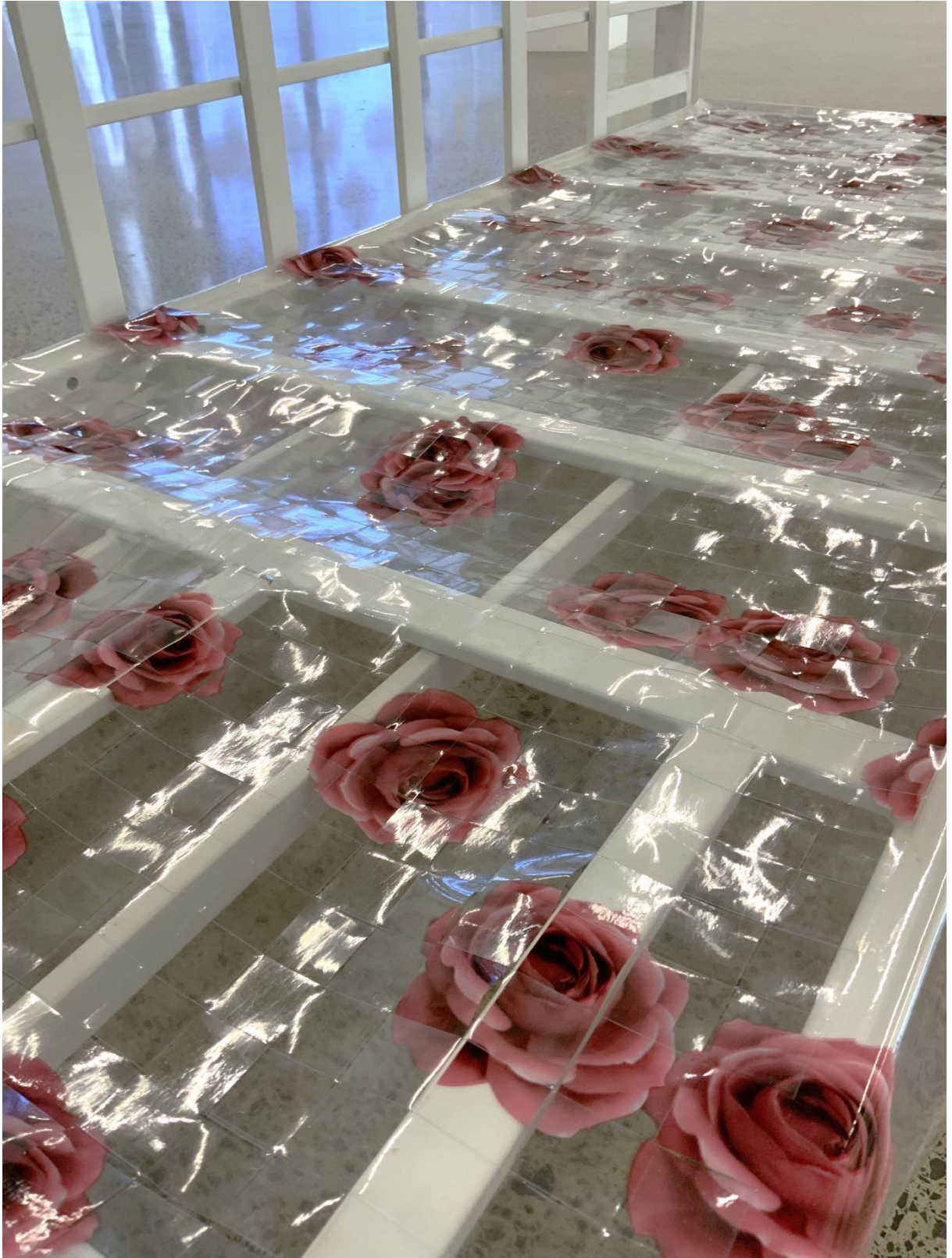


Figure 28. Jermaine Alhambra, *Couch*, September 2022.



Figure 29. Jermaine Alhambra, *Being there, while being here* installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.



Figure 30. Jermaine Alhambra, *Embroidery table and seat*, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.



Figure 31. Detail. Jermaine Alhambra, *Embroidery table* with *Untitled 2021* weighing on top, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.



Figure 32. Jermaine Alhambra, *Lampin wall*, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.



Figure 33. Jermaine Alhambra, *Being there, while being here* installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.



Figure 34. Jermaine Alhambra, *Being there, while being here* installation, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.



Figure 35. Jermaine Alhambra, *Patterned stacks*, September 2022. Image by Emily Parr.

curtain background

light fabrics

Mismatched
pillow cases / patterns

stacks of pillows
and blankets

pattern on pattern
these blankets
were thin, depending
on whether we use
air conditioning or just
the fan we
adjusted accordingly we
didn't really use comforters
duvets.



Approx in 2000s

Since I didn't
have any teeth
yet, I was probably
8-10 months old

the curtain is
made from similar
fabric to the
pillow cases and
bed sheets

I remember when as I
grew older really liked
the feeling of this particular
fabric/blanket (the one with
red flowers) It was the
smoothest and felt lux
compared to the other
fabrics

Figure 36. Album Annotation no. 3: In our bedroom, 2021.

table cloth

aunt's
t-shirt

flowy
abstract
pattern

pillow cases

pillow cases
used as
table cloth



My 8th month birthday celebration (Feb 2000)

In the photo: Mom & Dad, me,
Tila Jinky

the plate
on the
table also
has floral
pattern

my baby
clothes

- My mom is wearing
a flowy day dress

- I remember the dress felt
like a silky rayon fabric

- floral pattern: orange/yellow-ish
flowers with black
background

- the very
white objects are
the brightest as
they reflect the
light the best

Figure 37. Album Annotation no. 4: My Happy 9th Month celebration, 2021

Leaf on bedsheet

ribbon / flower shaped
lace hair
pins



→ bear patterned
curtain

→ old air conditioner

→ bear motif

↓
picture bible
for children

↓
iris flower
bed sheets

Figure 38. Album Annotation no. 5: me holding a children's Bible, 2021.

stuffed-toy bag



I used to have a Hello Kitty
collection. Mommy gifted, stuffed toys
merch, clothes bags...

My favorite piece was a bag
the Hello Kitty head itself was
the bag



twice
as big as
the head
of this
one

I loved it because
it was also quite soft
like a pillow. The texture
and the tactile feel is
quite similar to Kathmando
padded jackets

Figure 39. Album Annotation no. 6: I was obsessed with Hello Kitty, 2021

coffee table tapettry

display of baby photos
most of the photo-frames are ceramic

visually the decorations on these photo frames resemble the icing decoration on these cakes



more ceramic objects - (frames, figurres, vases, plates) in shelf display

cake icing

(June 3, 2001)

my brother was baptised on my 1st birthday, he had his own cake



Figure 40. Album Annotation no. 7: Nanay Luming in the duster dress holding me, 2021.

floral curtains
curtains

(I got confused and mixed it up with the tagalog word which is 'kurtina')
concrete walls

bamboo sala set

Bamboo interior

cousin's t-shirt
the flower on her hat



my brother pulling my hair
- our house-helper holding my brother

Cousins on my father's side

Mamang's house (kubo)
in La Union
(province)

We live in mainland city and so most of my father's siblings and their family

We visit occasionally and it is usually in the holidays, such as Christmas or New year's. My Dad and his sibling usually co-ordinate the visits, so most of my cousins would be present.

Figure 41. Album Annotation no. 8: My baby brother pulling my hair in La Union, 2021.

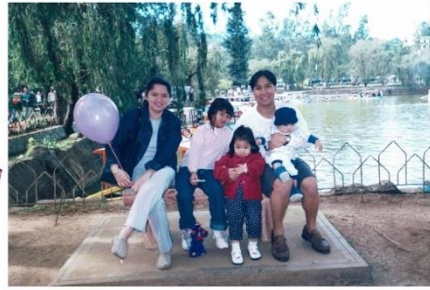
my cardigan

Mom's jean jacket

willow tree

lake
with colour full
paddling boats

my cousin holding
a puppet, sold
from the vendors



→ fence pattern

My sister now
has this exact
jean jacket.
She acquired the
jacket when we went
back to the Philippines
in 2019

Mum was actually
pregnant with my
sister in this photo.

Visiting Baguio City

↳ know for being one of
the cooler/colder places
in the Philippines in the
summer months

*that's why we are
wearing our long sleeves
and jackets

I still have this little red cardigan
in the Philippines. I didn't take it with
me since it was for my youngest
cousin on my mother's side.

this cardigan had red flower buttons
and two front pockets

- flowers on my mary jane shoes -

This was our first-
time visiting Baguio,
including my parents

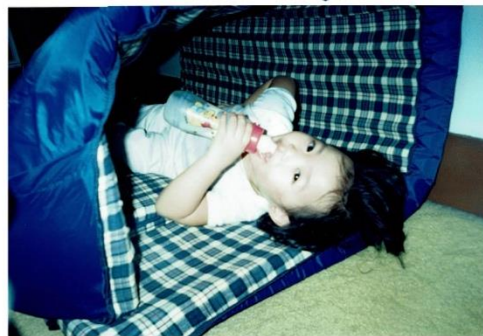
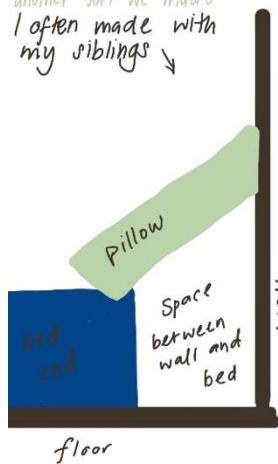
Figure 42. Album Annotation no. 9: My little red cardigan in Baguio City, 2021.

matress cover lining
carpet

(side view)

another fort we made
I often made with
my siblings

the pillows would be placed on the edge of
the bed and would lean against the wall



My makeshift fort made from
this thin foam mattress

The structural integrity of
this fort, allows small
occupant to kick the
roof without collapsing

→ (Kick = paddling
an upside down
bicycle)

like a tunnel
we would fill up the
whole width of the bed
with pillows placed next to
each other

Figure 43. Album Annotation no. 10: mattresses to forts, 2021.

- bike sticker
- bike wheels

This was our sala area and this became one of our playing areas. We would move the furniture aside for more floor space.

In the photo, I am on my tricycle that was gifted from an uncle for my b-day.

The tricycle had a bucket at the back like a cargo bike and also had a safety buckle.



display cabinet shelf layers: (from top to bottom)

→ 1st) this was where kept all the small trinket for display, so that the kids wont be able to grab/ reach... eg. fancy candles, baptism/party/wedding favours..

→ 2nd) our toys are covering the plates at the back

→ 3rd) Now all filled with stuffed toys that used to house the plates that are now on 1

sala = living room

Figure 44. Album Annotation no. 11: tricycle, 2021.

My dad washing the car while I was playing in the rain

- leaf colour
- car paint

- My dad takes advantage of the rain to wipe the car.

- At This time Philippines already has high pollution so dust and pollution is easily collect specially through cars



The car is older than me. We still have it in the Philippines. We also used it the last time we visited in 2019. approx 23-yrs-old)

the wall where the cars are parked against, covers/separates the factories from our barangay

↳ Sometimes the rain would leave nasty watermark mix with dust after the car dries from the rain if the surface of the car is not clean

Figure 45. Album Annotation no. 12: My dad cleaning the car in the rain, 2021.

heart necklace

- I was obsessed with anything heart-shaped

- our walls were filled with learning posters

- Except for my cousin we were all watching the TV



- My Uncle and Auntie and cousin came for a visit since they were around town.

My cousin was looking through your photo album (the one in yellow)

The one next to me is my cousin from my dad's side

→ This was the other side of our room



My parents and us the kids, all slept in the same room until we moved to Aotearoa.

Figure 46. Album Annotation no. 13: I love red hearts, 2021.

balloon

cake icing lettering

our favorite mousse cake



→ who's B-day?

my sister's monthly celebration (since she's just a few months old)

→ heart shaped bowl → my favorite bowl

→ Pancit Canton (stir fried noodle dish)

Our dining table used to have a lazy Susan

→ This wooden table has a glass top that is removable. We would layer different decorative fabrics/cloths/materials depending on the events like parties, special celebrations. In this case, since we are celebrating amongst ourselves my parents have kept the daily layer. Though in the photo it looks like traditional lace, this is actually PVC lace. We put a layer in between the table and glass to protect the wooden table. The glass also protects the table. then the placemats protect the glass.

• memories with the table
When we used to play "tagu-taguan" (hide n' seek) with my sibling or cousins. I would hide under this table. Everytime we play we became more creative with our hiding spots.
→ I decided to hide under the table but on the chair seat while it's placed under the table. Since the table cloth covers the seat-part of the chair, I am well hidden when they look for me under the table



Figure 47. Album Annotation no. 19: Who's Birthday, is it? 2021.

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