



Maria Taniguchi's Echoes

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Photos courtesy of **Maria Taniguchi**

Get lost in wonder as you view Maria Taniguchi's art pieces.

(main photo) *Untitled (Dawn's Arm)*
Digital print on photo paper

(right) *Untitled (Mirrors)*
Acrylic, canvas, wood

You spend a good number of minutes watching a video documentary on a large flat LCD screen showing workers chiseling pieces of marble with electric powered tools. You are seated on a long wooden bench—there are two of them, more like rectangular boxes—facing the two LCD screens positioned side by side. Behind the monitors, you can see some greenery in the pocket garden outside the floor to ceiling glass windows of the gallery in that part of the UP Vargas Museum where Maria Taniguchi's works are on exhibit.

You learn that Taniguchi traveled to Romblon, well known for its marble quarries, to work with the local marble carvers to recreate the arms of the sculpture of a female figure called 'Alba' or 'Dawn', by the leading German sculptor, George Kolbe. The sculpture was given a prominent spot in a small pool of the German pavilion, which was made of glass, steel and several kinds of marble, built by revolutionary modern architect, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe for the 1929 International Exhibition held in Barcelona, Spain.

Taniguchi chose to recreate the arms, yes, just the arms of the famous female figure, and the resulting piece is labeled 'Untitled (Dawn's Arms)'. Aside from the digital video documentary presented on the flat panel monitor, around the bend on another side of the gallery, is a mounted digital print on photo paper of the said piece. And that is it. Nowhere do you find the actual sculpture of the

deconstructed arms, three pieces in all. What are presented before you are just the digital print and the digital video of the absent sculpture.

Maria Taniguchi's exhibit, which opened at the Vargas Museum on March 30 and ends on May 28, is titled 'Echo Studies'. "The works function off of each other," Taniguchi explained. She had been working on similar ideas for a couple of years now. "It was easy to decide which pieces made sense in the space as soon as the decision to show essentially just two works was made, *Untitled (Mirrors)* in one space, and, *Untitled (Dawn's Arms)* in another," she noted.

'*Untitled (Mirrors)*' is composed of large-scale (almost occupying a whole wall each) geometric abstracts done in acrylic, canvas, wood, as well as detail in graphite on paper resting atop a wood plinth. The materials she uses depend on which work, so she has no favorites. "As long as the form functions," she said. So what's the mark of a Maria Taniguchi work? "I'd say it's efficient as forms. It doesn't have to be minimal though, like the last one at Vargas," she remarked.

"The Vargas Museum would like to offer some of its spaces as platforms for contemporary artists to realize projects that the commercial and institutional venues could not accommodate for various reasons," said Dr. Patrick D. Flores, curator of the Vargas Museum. "Maria Taniguchi deserves this kind of space because she has demonstrated a



“Untitled (Dawn’s Arm)”
Digital video, flat panel monitors, wood

“It was a natural inclination to make things and draw a lot when I was very young.”

strong grasp of the condition of being in the contemporary world by addressing such problems as the production of knowledge and the intimacy of knowing. In this particular project for the Vargas, she confirms her precocity in form-making as well as her intellectual inclination to take on conceptual issues of reference and presence by way of a conversation with a distinct tradition of making sculpture in the island of Romblon and the history of modernism in the west.”

“It was a natural inclination to make things and draw a lot when I was very young,” Maria related. “Then I went to Makiling, an art high school, where I studied under some interesting artists like Alfredo Aquilizan.” Now based in Australia, Aquilizan works mostly with installations made of collected objects informed and made meaningful by personal history. Maria graduated in 1981 from the University of the Philippines with a degree in Fine Arts, major in sculpture. She then took her MFA Art Practice in Goldsmiths

London in 2009 and in the same year, was accepted in the LUX Associate Artists Programme, an arts agency supported by Arts Council England. She now lives and works between London and Manila. She has exhibited extensively both locally and abroad. □

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