

SILVERLENS

Silverlens New York Announces Inaugural Exhibitions by Martha Atienza and Yee I-Lann for Gallery's First New York Program

— Opening September 8, 2022 in Chelsea—



Left: Martha Atienza, *Tigpanalipod (1) 11°02'06.4"N 123°36'24.1"E* (film still) **Right:** YEE I-Lann, *Measuring Project: Chapter 1*, digital inkjet pigment print on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper, 2021 (detail)

(NEW YORK, NY — August 11, 2022) — **Silverlens**, the established Manila-based gallery known for its robust roster of Asian Diaspora artists, is pleased to announce the opening of their first New York gallery with inaugural exhibitions by artists **Martha Atienza** and **Yee I-Lann**. The shows will open on **September 8, 2022** in Silverlens' new space at 505 W 24th Street in Chelsea.

The trans-continental expansion from Manila to New York marks the beginning of a new chapter in the gallery's eighteen-year existence. The expansion is necessitated by the growth of the gallery's program and the drive to bring a broader representation of Southeast Asian, Asian Pacific, and Diasporic artists into the wider framework of the contemporary art dialogue. The New York gallery plans to activate the space with both gallery-curated and curator-led exhibitions, along with artist talks, panel discussions, film screenings, and events.

To commence the gallery's new home, Silverlens will present the first New York solo gallery shows by artists **Martha Atienza** and **Yee I-Lann**. Atienza and Yee, both mixed-raced women artists working collaboratively with their island communities, embody the culture and energy that allow art to be made under the most difficult circumstances.

Atienza's exhibition will include new video works entitled *Tigpanalipod (the Protectors) 11°02'06.4"N 123°36'24.1"E* and *Adlaw sa mga Mananagat Bantayan (Fisherfolks Day)*, initially developed for the Istanbul Biennale 2022, which raises questions about land ownership and class in communities across the Bantayan Islands in the Philippines. Yee's exhibition will feature photographic works as well as woven

textile pieces including a billboard woven by Malaysian and stateless women from the Bajau and Sama Dilaut communities on Omdal Island found on the border between the Sulu and Celebes Seas.

Martha Atienza: *The Protectors*

Atienza's practice explores installation and video as a way of documenting and questioning issues around the environment, community, and development. Her work is mostly constructed in video, of an almost sociological nature, studying her direct environment in the Philippines.

In this new body of work for Silverlens New York, Atienza asks, 'Who owns the land? Who owns the sea?'. These are questions that persistently come to mind when working with communities across the Bantayan group of islands, north of Cebu.

Under the guise of promised economic prosperity, Bantayan has been subjected to the interests of the tourism industry, landed elites, and the local and provincial government, sitting in stark contrast to idyllic imaginations of island life portrayed in the media, and the arts. Whether it's a bill removing Bantayan's Wilderness area, making available privatization of land, the North Cebu Economic Zone, or the push to allow foreigners to have 100% ownership of assets, a neoliberal agenda continues in its coercive ways of dispossession. The island of Mambacayao Dako has been home to fisherfolk for generations, but as tourism is pushed forth, these fisherfolk are forcibly relocated to public and private housing projects thereby losing access to their coastal homes. This rise in tourism and process and dispossession turns the fisherfolk into workers left with little to no choice other than to work for resort owners. Atienza's work challenges this process of imposition on these island communities and the imaginations that foster it.

Atienza's work calls on the viewer to participate in the act of remembering. Places such as Bantayan Island remind us that the act of remembering is imperative to the continuation of cultural knowledge and being; our connections to places retain memories. Places such as these featured in her work, are repositories of knowledge for oppressed people. Remembering in itself is a way to challenge a system designed to suppress.

"On Fisherfolks Day, we were all crying. It was raining heavily. They said it was a blessing. Almost fifty boats with fisherfolk organizations and leaders coming together on water. How could they ignore us now?" said **Martha Atienza**.

Yee I-Lann: *At the Roof of the Mouth*

Yee I-Lann's practice has consistently spoken to urgencies in the contemporary world, from the vantage point of where she is from, mining personal story, Southeast Asian cultures and histories, local knowledge, critical theory, and mass aesthetics and experience.

Since 2018, Yee I-Lann has been collaborating with Sabahan Dusun and Murut weavers in the Keningau interior and with Bajau Sama Dilaut weavers from Pulau Omdal, Semporna to make tikar – woven mats. In the process, a craft community bound to the tourist market has found opportunities for innovation, and a village community has turned from fishing to weaving, in turn reducing pressure on the Coral Triangle.

A unique language of making has developed, bringing the weavers' skills, knowledge, and stories together with I-Lann's ideas and propositions, often making strong statements calling for a politics of inclusion: "This body of work claims and celebrates communities and their geographies, often at the peripheries, that give shape to the center."

Many languages meet for presentation: the digital pixel and the tikar weave, traditional and contemporary motifs, popular song, bodily gesture and sound, photographic image, and script, positioning art-making and aesthetics as a means of bridging and understanding diverse experiences and stories.

Yee I-Lann sees the woven mat as architectural; it provides a platform that invites communal gathering and activation, where everyone sits together on the same level. Throughout the region, all mother tongues have a different name for the mat, but nevertheless there is an unparalleled intimacy in the shared experience of the mat tied to everyday life and ritual. It is local, egalitarian, democratic, feminist. "The mat, to me, is a portal to story-telling and a way to discover and unroll other knowledges," Yee I-Lann says.

ABOUT SILVERLENS GALLERIES

Through its artist representation, institutional partnerships, art consultancy, and exhibition programming including art fairs and gallery collaborations, Silverlens aims to place its artists within the broader framework of the contemporary art dialogue. Its continuing efforts to transcend borders across art communities in Asia have earned it recognition as one of the leading contemporary art galleries in Southeast Asia. Silverlens was founded in Manila by Isa Lorenzo in 2004, she was joined as co-director by Rachel Rillo in 2007.

ABOUT MARTHA ATIENZA

In 2017, Martha Atienza won the Baloise Art Prize in Art Basel for her seminal work *Our Islands*. Since 2017, her work has been shown and collected worldwide. Prior to this, she was awarded the Ateneo Art Awards in Manila in 2016 and 2012, and the prestigious Cultural Center of the Philippines Thirteen Artist Award in 2015. Recent biennials and triennials include the Bangkok Art Biennale: *Escape Routes*, BACC, Bangkok (2020), Honolulu Biennial: *To Make Wrong / Right / Now*, Oahu, Hawaii (2019); and the 9th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art, QAGOMA, Brisbane (2018). Recent group exhibitions include *Breaking Water* at Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2022), *Animal Kingdom* at Âme Nue Artspace, Hamburg (2021). Forthcoming exhibitions in 2022 include the solo exhibition inaugurating Silverlens New York, participation in the Istanbul Biennale, and a group show at the Jameel Art Centre in Dubai.

ABOUT YEE I-LANN

Yee I-Lann is one of Southeast Asia's leading figures in the visual arts, participating in major international exhibitions since the 1990s. Recent exhibitions include *Until We Hug Again* (CHAT Mill6, Hong Kong) and *Borneo Heart* (SICC, Kota Kinabalu), *Afro-Southeast Asian Affinities during a Cold War* (Vargas Museum, Manila), the 10th Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art (QAGOMA, Brisbane) and the inaugural Indian Ocean Craft Triennial.

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