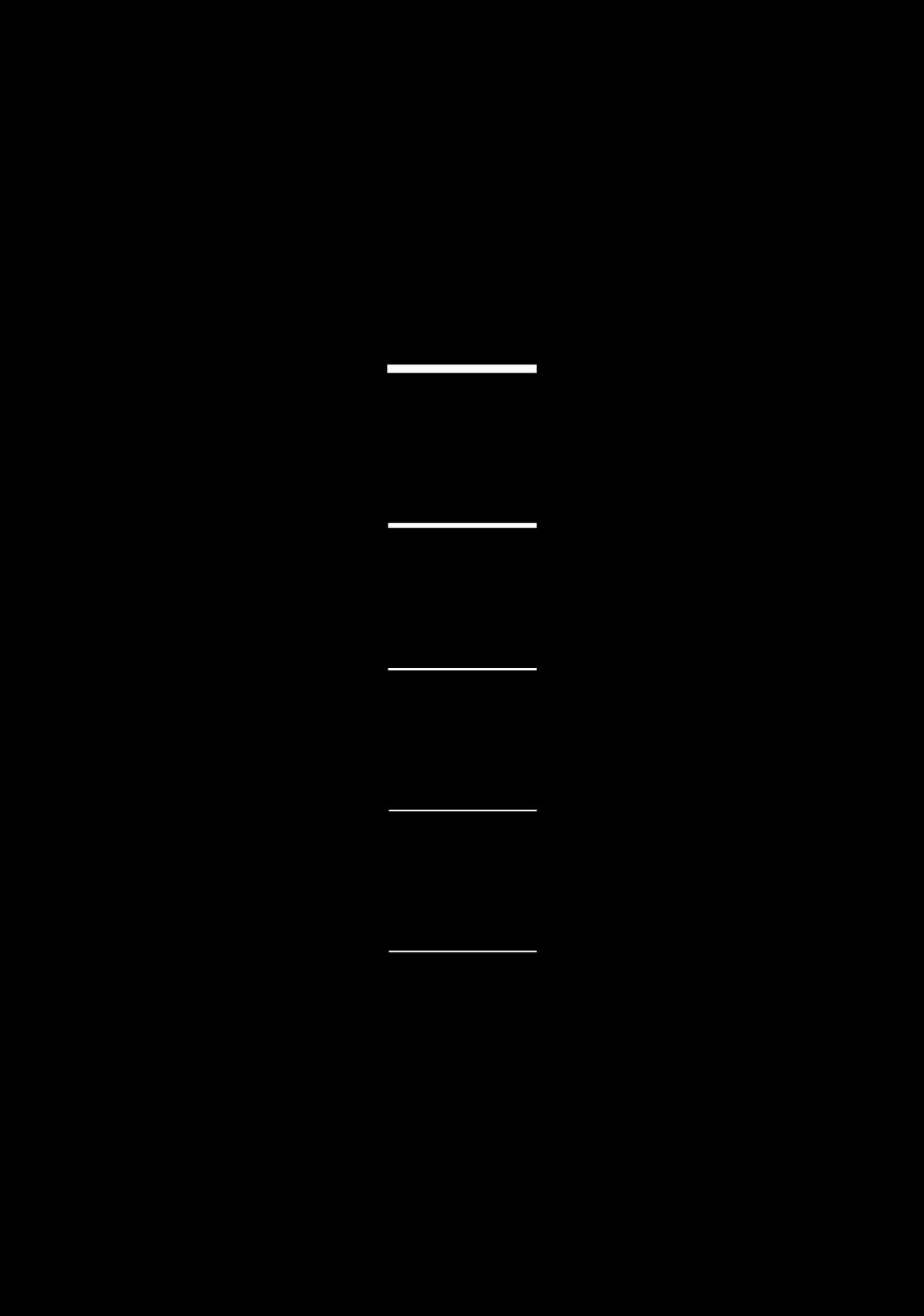




# NOME

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FABULOUS EXPLOITS  
OF THE FAR EAST  
CIAN DAYRIT



NOME

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FABULOUS EXPLOITS OF THE FAR EAST

C I A N D A Y R I T

JUNE 5 – AUGUST 28, 2021

N O M E G A L L E R Y . C O M

Potsdamer Str. 72 | 10785 Berlin | Germany

## FABULOUS EXPLOITS OF THE FAR EAST

by Gwen Bautista

Cian Dayrit's *Fabulous Exploits of the Far East* draws from Amado Guerrero's analysis of the semi-colonial and semi-feudal conditions in the Philippines as discussed in his seminal work, *Philippine Society and Revolution*, published in 1971. The exhibition visualizes the dynamics of Philippine society as a bastion for the longest-running protracted people's war against puppet regimes and their subservience to imperialist states and neoliberal policies while inviting discourse, engagement, and self—criticism to look for one's position in the process of the struggle.

At the same time, Dayrit interrogates colonialism, power, and the establishment of imperialist identities as presented in Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961). The totalizing effects of colonialism and the necessity for the colonized to overcome the alienation produced by systemic oppression are at the core of Dayrit's four series of works that respond to these exigencies. Recalling documentation that cites an American military officer during the pre-commonwealth era who described Filipinos as "fabulous exploits," the exhibition examines the identities forced upon colonial subjects by ruling powers.

Contemplating the essence of *mapping* as a tool to orient and navigate these contradictions and dichotomies, Dayrit sets out to identify the movements that had given colonialism its form and historical content through sculptures, installations, and textile works that unpack and address the inner workings of imperialist plunder and its actual and direct effect on people while foregrounding shared cultural, economic, and political realities. Hence, the ugliness of these issues is materialized through charming and intentionally aesthetically appealing objects that tread the line between sarcasm, humor, and wit to analyze and exorcise the oppressor.

### ***Archetypes of the Semi-Colony, 2017***

This series represents episodes and chapters of colonialism in the Philippines, as well as other developing countries with similar conditions, through carved wooden masks that establish the separation of colonial identities, which broadly refer to what Fanon calls "nested societies, which are not complementary." The narratives that these masks contain make visible the process of dehumanization inherent in colonialism, ranging from forgotten folklore and the enslavement of indigenous peoples to



present-day exploits experienced through the economic subjugation that lies at the core of capitalism and imperialism.

One of these masks is drawn from folklore told by the Aytas (indigenous peoples of Bataan) about a mythical forest dweller named *Lumong*, characterized as a less malevolent tree giant. It has been said that Lumong bites those who wish to harm nature yet aids those who show respect for the land, alluding to pre-colonial belief systems based on the relationship of the indigenous peoples with ancestral lands. Another mask with an engraved fish cites abuses that the American colonizers inflicted upon the indigenous population through forced labor in exchange for cans of sardines. These accounts recognize and ascertain the identities that the legacy of colonialism diminishes or creates.

#### ***Terra Rationarium*, 2018**

Assemblages in the form of dioramas or terrariums are found in this series. These objects reconfigure microscopic life-worlds, which create theatrical depictions of cruelty (ranging from highly local to supranational) bound together by exploitative practices of hegemonic neo-imperial powers. Dayrit assembles a gallery of horrors marked with intersections that encapsulate different forms of slavery: mineral extraction, monocrop agriculture, cheap labor, militarization, and the market of surplus that geographer Jason Moore describes as the “internal and external frontiers that snake their ways into our *web of life*.”

Postcolonial scholars regard the Philippine archipelago as tropical science laboratories and tourist destinations. The islands are treated as sources of inexhaustible raw materials and extractable minerals for modern modes of capitalist power. *Terra Rationarium* is a term used for land inventory and provides context for the treatment of land as repositories of wealth.

The images of houses spell out histories of aggression and corruption, its direct effects on the colonized body through objects that depict surplus labor, and other detrimental realities associated with colonial production. As such, amid the presumed independence and sovereignty, evidence of imperialism resides within the objects contained in these assemblages, which refer to the local corporations and agents of neoliberalism that uphold modern-day slavery and imperialism.

### ***Insidious Imperial Insignia, 2019***

Dominant in this series are paintings bearing images similar to badges and distinguishing marks of state armed forces. Charged with their connection to the deep culture of violence in maintaining the status quo, these emblems reveal, perhaps, the insidious function of military institutions, police forces, and other state-sponsored paramilitary organizations as mercenaries of tyranny, which in turn coddles aggressive capitalist mechanisms. This is particularly prevalent in the countryside, where incidents of the violent displacement of indigenous populations in ancestral lands are undertaken by mining corporations and other multinational corporations with similar agendas who aim to control these regions. Semi-feudal conditions remain strong within the haciendas; the majority are owned by descendants of compradors and colonial collaborators. Thus, armed struggle is a result of these atrocities. Guerrero writes, "At the base of this broad undertaking are the efforts of the proletariat to build up its independent strength through armed struggle supported mainly by the peasantry." On the other hand, Fanon reiterates that decolonization is a violent process without exception. He writes, "decolonization is always a violent phenomenon" and argues that "the naked truth of decolonization evokes for us the searing bullets and blood-stained knives which emanate from it."

### ***A Natural History of Struggle, 2021***

Juxtaposing images borrowed from Dean Worcester's archives with embroidered texts and other elements, *A Natural History of Struggle* articulates Dayrit's commitment to presenting counter-narratives to the imperial archives. Exuberant annotations reframe these images and insert the history of struggle and the protracted people's war. The series looks at the central and inescapable role of violence in colonialism and in subverting power structures rooted in such forms of dehumanization. In reclaiming these images, Dayrit stitches onto the colonized figures guns, spears, and pre-colonial *anting-anting* to arm their bodies against the colonial gaze.

*Fabulous Exploits of the Far East* proposes waypoints to stand and emanate from colonized spaces and states of affairs, visualizing these contradictions as a way of confronting oneself and all of the remaining oppressive structures. The colonized body never transforms to become unrestrained, instead, it learns to resist and emerge from this doom.

**Gwen Bautista** is an independent curator, art journalist, and artist from Manila, Philippines. She is interested in observing subtle forms of oppression tied to personal and political narratives as themes in art and exhibition making. Bautista is an alumna of Para Site's Workshops for Emerging Arts Professionals in Hong Kong and continues to collaborate with artists from the Asia Pacific region.



A R T W O R K S

*NATURAL HISTORIES OF STRUGGLE: FOR LAND,  
2021*

Objects, embroidery, imagery, and digital print on fabric  
(collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus)  
125 x 185 cm



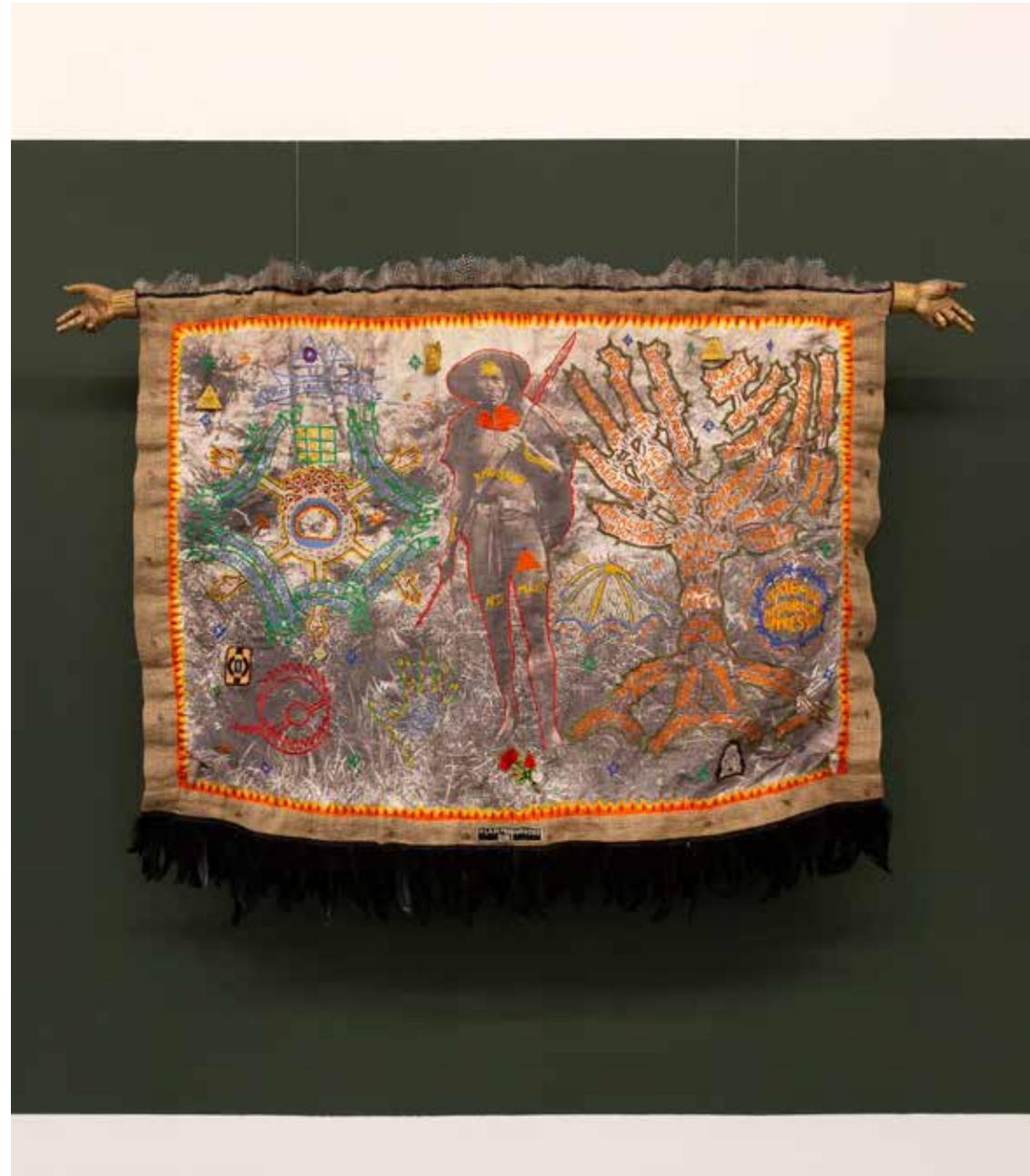
*NATURAL HISTORIES OF STRUGGLE: SPACES OF DISPUTE,  
2021*

Objects, embroidery, imagery, and digital print on fabric  
(collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus)  
105 x 160 cm



*NATURAL HISTORIES OF STRUGGLE: THE WILDERNESS,  
2021*

Objects, embroidery, imagery, and digital print on fabric  
(collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus)  
125 x 170 cm



*NATURAL HISTORIES OF STRUGGLE: SOVEREIGNTY,  
2021*

Objects, embroidery, imagery, and digital print on fabric  
(collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus)  
115 x 160 cm



*NATURAL HISTORIES OF STRUGGLE: CLASS,  
2021*

Objects, embroidery, imagery, and digital print on fabric  
(collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus)  
130 x 175 cm



*NATURAL HISTORIES OF STRUGGLE: CULT,  
2021*

Objects, embroidery, imagery, and digital print on fabric  
(collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus)  
120 x 180 cm



*NATURAL HISTORIES OF STRUGGLE: RHIZOME,*  
2021

Objects, embroidery, imagery, and digital print on fabric  
(collaboration with RJ Fernandez and Henricus)  
120 x 180 cm



*TERRA RATIONARIUM,*  
*2018*

Mixed media on woodwork,  
Five pieces, each 75 x 50 x 5 cm



*ARCHETYPES OF THE SEMI-COLONY I-X,  
2017*

dimensions variable  
Wooden sculptures (collaboration with Bellas Artes Projects)



*INSIDIOUS IMPERIAL INSIGNIA: PUPPET MERCENARIES,  
2020*

Acrylic on collage  
70 x 85 x 6 cm



*INSIDIOUS IMPERIAL INSIGNIA: RUSTY WING,  
2020*

Acrylic on collage  
70 x 85 x 6 cm



*INSIDIOUS IMPERIAL INSIGNIA: CAPTIVE FIN,  
2020*

Acrylic on collage  
70 x 85 x 6 cm



*INSIDIOUS IMPERIAL INSIGNIA: SLAVES OF CAPITAL,  
2020*

Acrylic on collage  
70 x 85 x 6 cm



*INSIDIOUS IMPERIAL INSIGNIA: BRATTY BRUTE,  
2020*

Acrylic on collage  
70 x 85 x 6 cm



## **CIAN DAYRIT**

b. 1989, Manila, Philippines  
lives and works in the Philippines

Cian Dayrit is an artist working in painting, sculpture, and installation. His interdisciplinary practice explores colonialism and ethnography, archaeology, history, and mythology. Dayrit subverts the language and workings of institutions such as the state, museums, and the military to understand and visualize the contradictions these platforms and formats are built upon.

His cartographic artworks, often materialized through embroidery, textile, and mixed media collages, plot the patterns of imperialism and feudalism in activities such as the extraction of natural resources and the displacement and exploitation of marginalized populations. At the same time, the works summon new imaginaries that recognize the overlapping struggles and periods of resistance. His multimedia works examine how empire scored out the maps of the modern world, how its aftermath perpetuates industrial development, and how alternative territories might be imagined from the ground-up. Through narratives that expose the inner-workings of imperial power, Dayrit's work invites us to reconsider how we spatially perceive and interpret the world. While informed by the experience of colonialism from the perspective of the Philippines, Dayrit's work nonetheless defies being tied to a specific position or location. Instead, his work and research cross over geopolitical and supranational bearings.

Dayrit studied at the University of the Philippines. He has been exhibited in international biennials, including the Gwangju Biennale; Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art; Dhaka Art Summit, Bangladesh; New Museum Triennial "Songs for Sabotage" in New York; and Göteborg Biennial. Dayrit has also participated in exhibitions at ParaSite, Hong Kong, Hammer Museum, L.A., the Metropolitan Museum of Manila, and the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw. In 2019 he was an artist in residence at Gasworks, London. His work will be included in the forthcoming edition of the Biennale of Sydney in 2022.

ED  
RAL

SUGAR  
BARON

PLAYBOY  
ART  
COLLECTOR

POLITICAL  
GOOD VIBES,  
BRO

BDTR

STATE  
PROPAGANDA  
MAGNATE

DIRTY WORK  
PROJECT MANAGER  
OF BELOVED TYRANT

TROPHY  
WIFE

ONARY



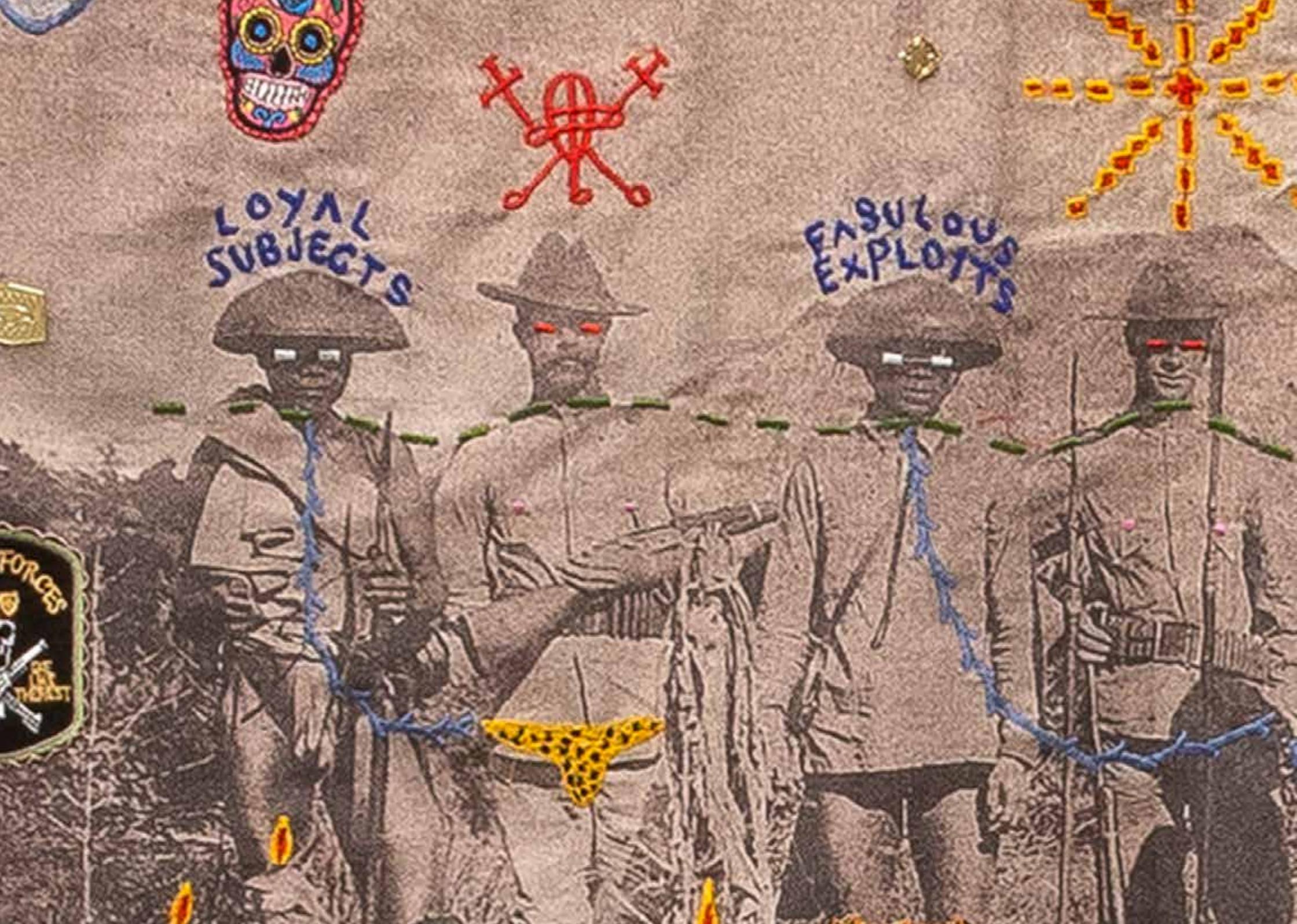


LOYAL  
SUBJECTS

EAGLE  
EXPLOITERS

FORCES

OF THE  
THIRST











EXPORT  
PROCESSING  
ZONES

LEISURE  
AND  
TOURISM

MILITARY  
INDUSTRIAL  
COMPLEX

MIXED-USE  
COMMERCIAL  
AREAS

MINERAL  
EXTRACTION

AGRI-BUSINESS  
PLANTATIONS

SWEAT-SHOPS

DEBT-TRAP  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
PROJECTS

100%  
SAVAGE





SHOPPING

LEISURE

DEVELOPMENT



Winston  
PARIS



PANGINOONG MAYLUPA  
PAMBANSANG BURGESYA  
PENBURGESYA

MANGGAGAWA

MAGSASAKA

KONTRADIKSYON



## FABULOUS EXPLOITS OF THE FAR EAST

Cian Dayrit

Essay by **Gwen Bautista**

Creative Direction: **515 Creative Shop**

Design: **Matteo Barbeni**

Text edit: **Jesi Khadivi**

Photography: **Billie Clarken**

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## NOME

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Gallery Manager: **Olga Boiocchi**

Sales Associate: **Jesi Khadivi**

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In memory of **Celso Dayrit**.

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STIFTUNGKUNSTFONDS



"COUSIN"  
(BODY GUARD)

SWISS BANK  
ACCOUNT  
SIGNATORY

DOMINANT  
CHAMBER OF

MUNG  
BOY TOY

NEW AGE  
AUNTIE

DRUGLORD  
BRAT