

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**The Montclair State University Galleries Announces  
*Dancing on Axes and Spears* by Caroline Garcia  
On View January 31 – April 21, 2023**

**New and recent works by Caroline Garcia explore her Filipino identity, assimilation and cultural memory, and Indigeneity through diasporic and feminist perspectives**



*Queen of the Carabao*, 2018, digital video with sound, 30:00 mins  
Courtesy of the artist.

Montclair, NJ — The Montclair State University Galleries will present Caroline Garcia's *Dancing on Axes and Spears* from January 31 through April 21, 2023, which invites visitors to stretch their understandings of Filipino cultural traditions, community resilience, and personal identity in the artist's first solo museum exhibition featuring an interactive martial arts gym, virtual and augmented reality artworks, and various forms of choreography. The exhibition will be on view at the George Segal Gallery, the University Galleries' flagship exhibition space.

Garcia's works explore her Filipino identity, assimilation and cultural memory, and Indigeneity through diasporic and feminist perspectives. Employing video, performance, sculpture, and installation, Garcia addresses a central theme of "alterity" – an anthropological term meaning "otherness" to mark her position in the diaspora where distance, language barriers, and colonization fracture traditional knowledge.

In Garcia's single-channel digital video, *Queen of the Carabao*, 2018, the artist rides a water buffalo species native to the Philippines through her father's ancestral farmlands and taps into traditional ways of life that she encountered during her visits to the Philippines as a child. Further expanding upon ideas of melancholia in relation to homeland and family, Garcia mourns her mother's death from cancer in the VR artwork *Choose Your Fighter*, 2020. Surrounded by floating screens featuring women of color offering advice and wisdom and armed with an Indigenous Filipino blowpipe known as a *sumpit*, Garcia channels Indigenous forms of resistance and resilience as a way to process her grief.

Garcia also pairs these aspects of loss and longing with her experiences living in the United States and growing up in Australia. In a newly commissioned installation, Garcia has designed a training facility focused on the needs of AAPI (and BIPOC) women, girls, and gender-nonconforming femmes to examine violence as a tool for self-preservation. The Gallery will be equipped with punching bags, plants used to make poison, and training armaments. Visitors are invited to interact with various components of the installation through written prompts outlined by Garcia and find their own relationship to violence within a spectrum of offense and defense.

The works featured in the exhibition are emblematic of the ways Garcia resists assimilation tactics within colonized land through unique survival strategies informed by elements of Indigenous Filipino culture and traditions including martial arts and spirituality, technology, and community collaborations. Garcia's exhibition at Montclair State University Galleries builds upon these themes and their relationships to larger systems including immigration, self-hood, and safety.

The exhibition is curated by Jesse Bandler Firestone, curator and exhibition coordinator of the University Galleries.

"Garcia reflects on feelings of belonging and alienation from her ancestral homeland in the Philippines and her current home in the United States, through a range of media and approaches," Firestone said. "Her reverence for Indigenous practices, sensitivity to issues of authenticity, and embrace of corresponding nuances related to her diasporic identity create a complicated, sentimental, and layered exhibition that conveys overlapping issues that are not easily distilled."

Among the highlights of the exhibition are:

- *Tropical Dissent*, 2022, is an ongoing series of 3D-printed, simulated weapons imagined and designed by the artist for personal use. These objects speak to a narrative of retaliation and reflect a fantasy scenario that permits BIPOC people to fight and resist colonial violence.
- *Force Field*, 2022, is a reconfigured augmented reality work that draws from the esoteric Filipino Martial Art practice of *orasyon* – a psychological training tool that consists of spoken spiritual meditations designed to focus and protect warriors as they prepare for a fight.

- *Trigger Finger*, 2021, features small robots programmed to perform gestures evocative of Pangalay dancers from the Southern Philippines. By translating movements traditionally performed by humans to digital robots, which inevitably glitch over time, Garcia addresses the inherent losses that occur in diasporic communities as culture changes across geographies and generations.

### **Publication**

A fully-illustrated digital publication will be available.

### **Gallery Hours**

Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, 12 – 5 p.m.

Thursday, 12 – 7 p.m.

Open on select Saturdays of the month and by appointment.

### **Programs & Events**

#### *Opening Reception*

Thursday, February 2, 5 – 7 p.m.

Celebrate the opening of *Case Studies 2: Justin Cloud - The Garden* in the Alexander Kasser Theater and Caroline Garcia's *Dancing on Axes and Spears* with a live performance *Pay Salutations* by members of the Kali Chrysalis Collective, featuring choreography inspired by martial arts. Remarks by Director Megan C. Austin, Curator Jesse Bandler Firestone, and artist Caroline Garcia.

#### *Curator's Tour*

Thursday, February 9, 12 – 1 p.m.

Join exhibition Curator Jesse Bandler Firestone in the gallery to learn more about the themes and content of the exhibition.

#### *Art Forum*

Monday, February 20, 5:30 – 8 p.m.

Artist Caroline Garcia in conversation with Curator Jesse Bandler Firestone in conjunction with Montclair State University's Art & Design program.

[Register on Eventbrite](#)

### **About The Montclair State University Galleries**

The Montclair State University Galleries brings together ideas, perspectives and dialogues to foster curiosity and shared understandings through art. The University Galleries presents diverse and inclusive exhibitions and programs creating connections that unite the campus experience with local and global communities. [www.montclair.edu/galleries](http://www.montclair.edu/galleries)

All exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public.

### **Social Media**

Join the conversation on social media by tagging @montclairstategalleries @\_garciagram and using the hashtags #DancingOnAxesAndSpears and #MontclairStateGalleries when posting.

**Support**

This exhibition is made possible, in part, by funds from the McMullen Family Foundation, the College of the Arts and private contributions.

**Media Contact**

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