

Nikki Luna - Play Ground

October 28 - November 30, 2016

Opening Reception: October 28th, 6 - 9 PM



Nikki Luna is a multi-media artist who creates sculptures and installations that deal with a number of social issues. Through her studio practice and travels, Luna has explored and conceptualized situations that address violence, inequality, gender roles and sexual exploitation against women in the Philippines. These complex narratives have been collected and symbolized through a range of materials such as resin, ceramics, blood, marble dust, sugar, neon, and sound.

In *Play Ground*, Luna presents 15 sculptural objects. Each object is composed of a gun made from cast resin and lace, placed in individual lightboxes that line the walls of the gallery. The translucence of the resin reveals the lace within the object. In this way, both victim and the instigator of violence coexist in a sombre, ethereal cenotaph. The objects all bear the title *Quince* (pronounced “kinse” from the Spanish word for the number 15). Each weapon makes reference to both individual acts of violence as well as the recurring ways that the number 15 engages them.

The gun and it’s corresponding victim play a role in the unending litany of violence and repression that the artist has documented over the years. One gun, for example, represents the sidearm carried by a police officer who imprisoned and prostituted 15 year old girls over a number of years. Another stands for an Australian missionary who was gang-raped and killed on the 15th of August, 1989. Yet another gun symbolized a young girl, who never even reached 15 years of age but was shot by two men hunting her grandfather, an alleged drug pusher. In another sense, in the Catholic Church, the number 15 in the monthly calendar stands for a day of rest, as well as the day that Jesus was laid in his tomb. Symbolic of rest in peace, Luna here embraces the sad significance that these senseless acts never cease.

The present situation in the Philippines makes these stories and their physical representations all the more prescient. 100 days in office, President Rodrigo Duterte has engaged on an unforgiving crackdown against alleged drug users or sellers. To date, almost 4,000 Filipino citizens have been killed, many by fellow civilians. Increasingly condemned internationally, many fear that Duterte’s promise to not prosecute the killers has only encouraged the further embrace of violence in a country already mired by a brutal legacy of it.

The guns are cast from a Filipino Policeman’s sidearm. By casting the guns, Nikki Luna is not just mourning the women who have suffered in violence. She is also making a call to arms for herself and all women. As she says, “Womanhood is a weapon.”

OWEN JAMES GALLERY

Play Ground will coincide with the the U.N. International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, which takes place on November 25th.

This exhibition is also the second half of the gallery's presentation as part of the Asia Contemporary Art Week. As a proud [ACAW Consortium Partner](#) , we are pleased to participate in the 11th edition of Asia Contemporary Art Week (ACAW) – A curatorial & educational platform connecting over 40 New York & Asia based art institutions to present cutting-edge exhibitions, innovative projects, provocative dialogues and festivities citywide, culminating in ACAW's signature program FIELD MEETING Take 4: Thinking Practice and other special events.

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