

MIFFED BLUE RETURN

Yason Banal, Sky Hopinka, and Cici Wu
October 31 – December 20, 2019

MIFFED BLUE RETURN is an exhibition of moving image installations by Yason Banal, Sky Hopinka, and Cici Wu, each of which addresses the unstable currents that link remembrance, place, and aftermath.

Filed in Hong Kong and Minneapolis, Cici Wu's *Unfinished Return of Yu Man Hon* stars Jonathan Chang—a child actor known for his role in the Taiwanese classic *Yi Yi* (dir. Edward Yang, 2000)—as a grown-up Yu Man Hon, an autistic boy who crossed the Hong Kong–Shenzhen border into mainland China on August 24, 2000. Occurring not long after the 1997 handover, Man Hon's unsolved disappearance remains a vivid memory for many in Hong Kong, and has come to symbolize the vanishing of local culture.

Wu's film subverts familiar interpretations of Man Hon, positioning him not as an avatar of death and loss, but instead as a celestial being. Wu's camera, like a paper lantern, animistically trails the protagonist as he returns to the material world. Man Hon revisits places of sentiment and attachment, resurfacing lost memories of his own disappearance. In the process, the unfinished return of a city's sovereignty is associated with the state of incomplete reconstitution that characterizes ghostliness.

Cloudless Blue Egress of Summer, by Sky Hopinka, likewise examines the porous connection between environment and memory in the afterlife of colonialism. Fort Marion, also known as Castillo de San Marcos, was built in 1672, and is located in St. Augustine, Florida. It was used as a prison during the Seminole Wars in the 1830s, and again towards the end of the Indian Wars in the late 1880s. Richard Henry Pratt, as the prison's warden, developed protocols of forced acculturation that were spread, through boarding schools, across the United States, manifesting his belief "that all the Indian there is in the race should be dead. Kill the Indian in him, and save the man."

Each section of the two-channel video recounts an aspect of Fort Marion's history, from Seminole chieftain Coacoochee's account of escaping, with nineteen other Seminole, from the fort, to ledger drawings made by prisoners given pen and paper in order to sketch recollections from the plains. The work traces the persistence of presence and memory despite the colonial paradigms of confinement and incarceration. In the ebb and flow of the ocean, which is overlooked by the fort, the artist develops a parallel, incomplete narrative thread, finding hope in what is innately unstable and effortlessly resolute.

Yason Banal's jostling installation *For a long time the glitch remained motionless...and in disbelief.. again!* centers upon the Parthenon-inspired Manila Film Center, built to provide a venue for the first Manila International Film Festival (MIFF) in 1982, a soft power extravaganza organized at the height of Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos' plunderous conjugal dictatorship in the Philippines. Scaffolding tragically collapsed during the brutalist design's hurried construction, fatally trapping a number of workers under quick-drying cement. The constellation around the failed structure and its troubling history of pageantry and power as well as its patrons' recent, dark, triumphant return is made manifest through video collage, drone painting, hyperlink research, sculpture and intermittent technology. Banal decelerates 47 Canal's WiFi made accessible to the public through the gallery's "MIFFED" network (password: MIFFED19)—

approximating the Philippines' slow internet speed by way of the Peso to Dollar buffering exchange rate, as the WiFi transfer is now set in New York like an offshore/online account. Banal scans and extends the 'extrarchitectural craft' of MIFF and the Manila Film Center situating these in dialogue with abstract mechanisms related to crony capitalism, post-truth, cultural patronage and neo-imperialism in the Philippines today.

In each artwork, time is cyclical and the action of returning reframes the present and future.

Yason Banal lives and works in Manila, Philippines. His practice traverses installation, photography, video, performance, text, curating, and pedagogy, employing critical and poetic strategies amidst intersections and frictions as well as mechanisms and mysteries among seemingly divergent systems. His works have been exhibited widely including the Tate, Frieze, Vargas Museum, Christie's, Singapore Biennale, Shanghai Biennale, Asia Pacific Triennial and more recently at National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Asia Film Archive and Venice Architecture Biennale. He obtained a BA in Film at the University of the Philippines, MA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London and art residencies at AIT Tokyo and CCA Singapore. He teaches at the University of the Philippines Film Institute and heads its Film Center.

Sky Hopinka (Ho-Chunk/Pechanga) was born and raised in Ferndale, Washington and spent a number of years in Palm Springs and Riverside, California, Portland, Oregon, and is currently based out of Vancouver B.C. and Milwaukee, WI. In Portland he studied and taught chinuk wawa, a language indigenous to the Lower Columbia River Basin. His video work centers around personal positions of Indigenous homeland and landscape, designs of language as containers of culture, and the play between the known and the unknowable. He received his BA from Portland State University in Liberal Arts and his MFA in Film, Video, Animation, and New Genres from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and currently teaches at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia.

His work has played at various festivals including ImagineNATIVE Media + Arts Festival, Images, Wavelengths, Ann Arbor Film Festival, Sundance, Antimatter, Chicago Underground Film Festival, FLEXfest, and Projections. His work was a part of the 2016 Wisconsin Triennial and the 2017 Whitney Biennial. He was awarded jury prizes at the Onion City Film Festival, the More with Less Award at the 2016 Images Festival, the Tom Berman Award for Most Promising Filmmaker at the 54th Ann Arbor Film Festival, the New Cinema Award at the Berwick Film and Media Arts Festival and the Mary L. Nohl Fund Fellowship for Individual Artists in the Emerging artist category for 2018. He was a fellow at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University in 2018-2019 and Sundance Art of Nonfiction Fellow for 2019.

Cici Wu (b.1989) lives and works in New York. She received her BA from The City University of Hong Kong, School of Creative Media. In 2013, she moved to the United States, where she earned an MFA in Sculpture from Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore. Wu has had solo exhibitions at 47 Canal, New York (2018), Bonneville, Noisy-le-Sec, France (2018), and has participated in group exhibitions at Interstate Projects, Brooklyn (2019), Para Site, Hong Kong (2018), and Triangle Art Association, Brooklyn (2017), among others. She also co-founded PRACTICE: a studio, residency, and exhibition space based in New York which has been operating since 2015.