



Photo Credit: Ligaiya Romero

### **Biography**

Maia Cruz Palileo is a multi-disciplinary, Brooklyn-based artist. Migration and the permeable concept of home are constant themes in her paintings, installations, sculptures, and drawings. Influenced by the oral history of her family's arrival in United States from the Philippines, as well as the history between the two countries, Maia infuses these narratives using both memory and imagination. When stories and memories are subjected to time and constant retelling, the narratives become questionable, bordering the line between fact and fiction, while remaining cloaked in the convincingly familiar.

Maia is a recipient of the Art Matters Grant, Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters & Sculptors Grant, Jerome Foundation Travel and Study Program Grant, Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant, NYFA Painting Fellowship, Joan Mitchell Foundation MFA Award and the Astraea Visual Arts Fund Award. She received an MFA in sculpture from Brooklyn College, City University of New York and BA in Studio Art at Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts. Maia has participated in residencies at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine, Lower East Side Print Shop, New York, Millay Colony, New York and the Joan Mitchell Center, New Orleans.

### **Artist Statement**

Influenced by the oral history of my family's arrival in the United States from the Philippines, as well as the colonial relationship between the two countries, my paintings infuse these narratives with memory and care. Figures appear and disappear in lush landscapes, domestic interiors, and colonial structures. Deep blues and reds suggest dark realms where superstition, myth, and history blur. Evoking a hybrid sense of place, they serve as metaphors for migration and assimilation.

In 2017, at Chicago's Newberry Library, I researched Damián Domingo's watercolor album, Isabelo De los Reyes' *El Folk-lore Filipino*, and the Dean C. Worcester photographic archive. The Worcester archive was

commissioned by the US government to document the imperialist project of William McKinley's "Benevolent Assimilation" and Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden". Together, these sources presented an image of Filipinos constructed through native eyes and through the eyes of the other.

I was drawn to the people in the pictures and felt the impulse to remove them from this historical framework. With the detailed and loving care of Domingo's watercolors in mind, I drew figures, plants, and other elements from the archive. Then, I cut out each drawing, creating a new library of cutouts: people, animals, foliage, moons, and mountains. The pieces were then placed in various arrangements and recorded via graphite rubbings. This process allowed for the cutouts to be combined into potentially infinite visual narratives and led to the generation of full color oil paintings.

Improvisation through color and composition mimic the spontaneous manner in which oral histories are recounted. Figures mingle with specters with defiance and gentleness. In contrast to the heavily captioned US photographic archive in which a westerner claims a singular narrative about a group of people, these paintings seek to resist such categorization, with agency, without explanations or captions.